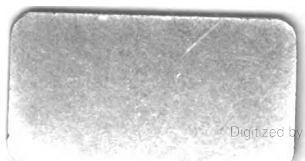




**LIFE OF THE
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

O'CONNELL



★ PUBLISHERS' WEEKLY.

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THE LIFE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

As Set Forth in Her Litany

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BY

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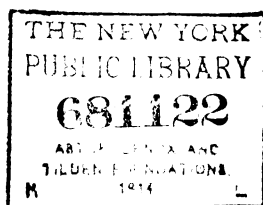


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P R E F A C E.

Every child fondly loves its mother. Not in words only, but by deeds even more, it shows her the most beautiful devotion.

It finds daily, ingeniously enough, new methods to rejoice her soul, and have her to feel its deep veneration for her. Children never tire of repeating the praises of their mother. They cherish the tenderest affection for her, whose loveliness is ever present before their eyes.

In the home, they gather around her; when absent they think of her and long to return to her gentle smile and loving embrace.

In their appreciation of her, she is the best, the fairest, the greatest, yes, the noblest, the most lovable, the most beautiful of all women. There is none comparable to her. She surpasses all others. They laud her on every possible occasion, and resent the slightest reflection upon the beauty of her heart or soul. Their life is wholly wrapped up in hers.

Our love and devotion for our sweet loving Mother Mary caused us to write this book in her honor. As one of her children, we wish to lay at the feet of the most admirable of mothers our meed of homage.

Though every child of hers should indite a work, extolling her graces, there would still remain as much and more to be written in her honor. We cannot sing her praises too joyously, nor too often. The more we publish her singular devotion, her purity, her chastity, the more reason we will find to exalt her admirable virtues.

God has elevated her so signally above all His creatures, that what all men and nations might do to render her name greater would be, in comparison to His predilection for her, less than a raindrop to the waters of all the rivers and oceans of the world.

If these pages will bring one mind more to know her, one more heart to love her, one soul more to sing her praises, I shall deem my humble efforts well repaid.

In writing this book on the life of the Virgin Mother of our Redeemer, our own dear Mother, the ever glorious and blessed Virgin Mary, my soul's desire is that others may become her devout clients, who, in their day, will stand with all the saints and angels of God, verifying in their praises of her, throughout the eternal years, her glorious prophecy: "All generations shall call me blessed" (Luke I—48).

LIFE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

CHAPTER I.

HOLY MARY.

To cultivate a constant friendship, a sincere love for God; to seek the companionship of Jesus; to turn our mind and heart from worldly frivolities; to shun evil and to do good, is sanctity. Holiness of life is gained by a faithful performance of duty and the practice of virtue. Saint Paul tells us what we must do to live such a life when he says: "Denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world" (Tit. II—12). The sanctity of the body is purity, that of the soul is humility and charity.

"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service" (Rom. XII—1).

Jesus Christ sanctified his Church, "that he might present it to Himself, a glorious church,

not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy, and without blemish" (Ephes. V—27).

"For me to live," says again the same Apostle, "is Christ" (Phil. I—21). "And I live, now, not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. II—20). Our life must be, as far as possible, a counterpart of the life of our Saviour. We must not be ashamed of Him; we must take up our cross and follow Him; we must die for love of Him, die to all things earthly. In a word, we must seek to be another Christ.

The ground of a perfect life lies in the conformity of our will and of our works to the eternal law, which is in the spirit of God. He who regulates his ways, in accordance with that law, is just, holy, perfect. Sanctity is freedom from all blemish, a true love of God, an intimate union with Christ. The more we turn our heart away and purify it from mundane things, the nearer we approach to God, and the more holy do we become.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," says the Apostle, "who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ." "As He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we

should be holy and unspotted in His sight in charity" (Ephes. I—3 and 4). God alone is sanctity in His essence, He is eternal charity. Whoever seeks a union with God, and communicates with Him, lives a life pleasing to Him. Our sanctity increases in the ratio of our approachment to God and our devotion to Him.

The humble Virgin of Nazareth, Mary, being the nearest and most intimately united to God, is, of all His creatures, the most holy. A closer union with God never existed, nor could there be a more perfect one than that which resulted from the divine maternity.

Notwithstanding Mary's intimate relationship with God, her divine motherhood, it would have availed her but little had she not carried Jesus Christ in her heart, even more than in her chaste womb.

She shunned the world, abhorred sin, and lived only for Jesus. All her days were passed in the practice of virtue. With greater reason than Saint Paul could she exclaim: "And I live, now, not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gall. II—20).

She was holy in her eyes, ears, tongue, hands and feet; she was godly in her thoughts, desires, words, heart, and in all the powers of her soul;

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she was saintly in all her movements, all her actions; in a word, she was holy in both body and soul.

Jesus was, by nature, impeccable, Mary having been preserved by a special dispensation of divine grace from the blight of the original defilement, was exempt from any actual stain, even from the least imperfection.

Jesus dwelt in Mary's immaculate womb for nine months, was nourished at her breasts in infancy, and spent thirty of the thirty-three years of his life under her roof.

Mary took part in His labors and shared in His joys and ignominies. From the blessed moment of her conception, supereminent beauty graced her pure soul. In her tender infancy she consecrated herself to God, Whom she loved with an affection beyond that of all creatures capable of serving Him. She had no thought, no desire, save that of honoring Him. She performed no duty, she undertook no task but what tended to His greater glory. Her mind was in perfect harmony with His mind; her heart pulsed only in union with that of her Creator; her soul was filled with joyous rapture in her ecstasy of devotion to Him. Never for one mo-

ment in her life did she displease Him in thought, word or deed.

She knew not evil; no shadow of sin ever obscured her life, no stain of any kind ever darkened her soul.

She not only lived, but died for love of God, for it was her excessive love to be dissolved and be with Him that caused her soul to wing its flight to his bosom, and the sweet embrace of her divine Son, Jesus.

Like Him, she was tried; nevertheless, her sorrows drew her closer to God, to whom she had recourse for help and consolation. In the spirit of her divine Son, Jesus, who exclaimed, "Not what I will, but what thou wilt" (Mark XIV—36), did she humbly submit to God's holy will in these words: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to Thy word" (Luke I—38).

Though she understood not the words spoken to her by the holy man Simeon, concerning her divine Son, her love for, and her confidence in her Maker was such, that, albeit, at almost every step in life, her heart was transfixed with a sword of sorrow, her mind and heart were at all times one with that of God. "Be it done

unto me according to Thy word," came forth every moment from her pure and holy soul.

She was humble, like the meek and humble Jesus, and the Lord "hath regarded the humility of His handmaid" (Luke I—48). Her devotion for Jesus was like that of St. Peter; her charity, like that of St. John; her obedience, like that of Abraham; her patience, like that of Isaac; her resignation, like that of Jacob; her immaculateness excelled the chastity of all the Angels and Saints; her constancy was like that of Josue; her goodness, like that of Samuel; her tenderness, like that of David, and her abstinence, like that of Daniel.

Responding faithfully to every requirement of a perfect life, of exalted sanctity, she is indeed that Holy Mary of whom it is said in the inspired volume: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women" (Luke I—28).

CHAPTER II.

HOLY MOTHER OF GOD.

“Blessed are the eyes that see the things that you see” (Luke X—23). These words were spoken by the Divine Master to His disciples, in order that they might understand how privileged they were to believe Him to be the Messiah promised to the Patriarchs and Prophets, and to accept His teachings, as He unfolded to them, the secrets of His Father and the eternal truths of heaven.

Verily may we address these same words, “blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see,” to the children of the household of the faith, who acknowledge holy Mary to be the Mother of God, seeing as they do, by the eye of faith, the truth of this sublime mystery.

One day our Lord, interrogating His Apostles, asked them: “Whom do men say that the Son of Man is?” But they said: “Some John the Baptist, and others, some Elias, and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.” Jesus saith to them: “But whom do you say that I am?”

Simon Peter answered and said: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God."

And Jesus answering, said to him: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar Jona, because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father who is in Heaven" (Matt. XVI—13-18).

The question propounded to the Apostles by Christ, concerning Himself, may likewise be put to the world today, in regard to Holy Mary. Whom do men say that she is? And the answer comes: some, an ordinary woman, and others, some a good woman, and others, "man's tainted nature's solitary boast." But whom do you say that she is? And the child of faith responds: "She is the Holy Mother of God."

Flesh and blood did not reveal it to him, but our Father who is in Heaven. "Blessed are the eyes that see the things that you see."

It is by the unerring eye of faith that we believe Mary to be the holy Mother of God.

No man will disown his mother. To him she is the best, the greatest, the loveliest of women. And yet, though she be the mother of his body, she is not the mother of his soul, for God Himself breathes the soul into every man born into the world.

Man's soul is as independent of his mother as

creation is of him. Nevertheless, we rightly call her mother, as in truth she, who bore us in her womb, is our mother.

Mary, albeit, one of God's creatures like ourselves, is His holy Mother. While she is not the Mother of the Godhead, she is the Mother of the Word made flesh, who is God, equal to the Father from all eternity; hence she is in very truth the Mother of God.

Confess your faith in the Incarnation and, in the same breath, you affirm that Mary is the Mother of God. In the Incarnation, God takes unto Himself, human nature, remaining always God, therefore He is perfect man, as well as true God. But in His human nature, He is verily the Son of the Blessed Virgin Mary, from whose most chaste womb He took unto Himself that flesh and blood, whereby He became man. The relationship, therefore, between God, as to His human nature, and Mary is the same as that between any mother and her son.

While stoutly proclaiming this intimate union between God and the Blessed Virgin, we as solemnly declare that she is not the Mother of God in His divine nature, for in this He is her Creator, as He is of all other creatures, and not her Son. She is none the less His holy

Mother, albeit, in His human nature, for this human nature is the human nature of God, of which she is the Mother. Mary is, therefore, in very deed, the holy Mother of God, since from her the Eternal Son of God borrowed His flesh and blood and became man.

It was this Divine Person, who, by the power of the Holy Ghost, was conceived in her virginal womb and was born of her. Through this ineffable mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, Mary holds a unique place in the plan of man's redemption and salvation. For God has redeemed us in His human nature, and not in His divine nature—in that nature, therefore, which He took from His holy Mother, Mary.

In this, God has honored and exalted her above all other creatures, having endowed her with all the beauty and graces a creature is capable of receiving.

Our great love and devotion for Mary, the holy Mother of God, springs from her relationship with God, and this keeps alive in our breasts the great mystery of a God becoming man, through whom every blessing of Heaven comes to us. We honor Mary as the holy Mother of God, for God Himself so honors her, having chosen her from all eternity to be His

Mother. No higher dignity could the Creator confer upon His creature, than the one He bestowed upon Mary, the humble handmaid of the Lord. We would fail in our duty to God did we neglect to give the respect and pay the homage to His holy Mother that she deserves at our hands.

Who that does not love his mother above all others? Who that would not shed to the last drop of his heart's blood for her sake? Is God to be eclipsed by His own creatures in the veneration that a mother claims from her child? God's love for Mary tells us no. He favored her above all women, when He bestowed upon her from the first moment of her conception, an incomparable beauty of both body and soul, that of her immaculateness. With complacency did He regard her, and with a child's love and devotion for His Mother, has Jesus at all times honored her as His holy Mother.

Mary is also our Mother, and every true child of the Church considers himself favored in being able to invoke her as his holy Mother. She is not, it is true, our natural Mother, but she is our spiritual Mother, since she gave voluntarily of her substance to the Son of God, Christ Jesus, through whom we have been redeemed

and begotten, so to speak, to a higher and better life, the spiritual life in Christ Jesus.

All who accept the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, cannot, in reason or justice, fail to recognize this spiritual relationship between Mary, the Mother of the Divine Person, Jesus Christ, and those ransomed through His precious blood, shed for them on Calvary.

As her loving children, let us honor her as God honors her; let us love her as He loves her; let us magnify her name on earth, as the blessed do in Heaven. From the depths of our soul, let us call upon her as our most sweet, most loving Mother Mary, that we may be privileged throughout the endless ages of eternity to mingle our praises with those of all the Angels and Saints in Heaven, to honor her as God Himself honors her, as His holy Mother and ours, through Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER III.

HOLY VIRGIN OF VIRGINS.

“Blessed art thou among women” (Luke I—28). Mary, ever virgin, is the blessed among women, of whom the prophet Isaias, some seven hundred years prior to her day, announced: “Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bring forth a Son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel” (Isaias VII—14). “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father; and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever. And of His kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke I—32 and 33). In God’s own time, He sent the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary, to announce to her, that she should conceive in her womb and bring forth a son. “How shall I become a mother,” said Mary to the Angel, “for I have consecrated myself to God; I have taken a vow of virginity; I wish to continue faithful to my promises; I am a virgin, and I desire to remain a virgin!” How Mary loved her virginity! How she cherished the beauty of her pure soul! She preferred the

loveliness of her most chaste heart to the honor albeit wondrous, of becoming the Mother of God, if she should lose it, even though it be to enjoy such a glorious privilege.

Mary was the first of all women to consecrate her virginity to God. Without being bound by any precept, counsel or example, she made the offering of herself to the Almighty, and in so doing, became the Virgin of Virgins, the Mother of Virgins, who, following her example, take upon themselves to live in this holy, happy and exalted state.

It was only on the condition that she should remain a virgin, that Mary would give her consent to become the Mother of the Saviour. The Angel assured her that she would remain a virgin always, for: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee, and, therefore, also the Holy One who shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke I—35).

With the assurance that she would not place in jeopardy her virginity, the Virgin of Virgins exclaimed: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word" (Luke I—38). Mary conceived and brought forth a Son, without the loss of her virginity. Jesus

Christ, the Redeemer, was born of her, having regard to her virginity, wherein she eclipsed the purity of the Angels.

"I am," says the Virgin Mary, prefigured by the spouse of the Canticles, "the flower of the field, and the lily of the valleys" (Cant. II—1).

Of her, it is said, in the book of Wisdom: "She is a vapour of the power of God, and a certain pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty God, and, therefore, no defiled thing cometh into her."

"For she is the brightness of eternal light, and the unspotted mirror of God's majesty, and the image of His goodness" (Wisd. VII—25 and 26).

For she is the Immaculate from her Conception. She is without spot, the fairest flower of the field, the whitest and purest lily of the valleys.

This is the Virgin spoken of by the Prophets, whose beauty of body and soul dims the loveliness and purity of the brightest angels. She is the Virgin before whom the archangel prostrated himself. She is that Virgin of Virgins whom all generations shall call blessed.

CHAPTER IV.

MOTHER OF CHRIST.

In the eternal designs of the Creator, the Saviour whom He promised to our first parents in the garden of Paradise, ere He bade them to depart forever from it, and in the sweat of their face, earn their livelihood, was none other than His Divine Son, Jesus.

He it was who should crush the head of the serpent, through whose malice sin entered our human nature. This Saviour of men will be of the seed of the woman, and will, therefore, take unto Himself of her flesh and blood. He will tabernacle in her chaste womb. He is called Christ: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. XVI—16). Mary is, therefore, His Mother, for He did in reality descend into her virginal womb, took unto himself of her flesh and blood, and was born of her. Albeit true God, He is true man also, of the substance of the Virgin Mary.

Between Christ and Mary there is the real relationship of Mother and Son. Mary is His Mother; Jesus is her Son. He was, in His hu-

manity, subject to the Blessed Virgin, as every dutiful son is reverent and obedient to his mother. "He went down to Nazareth and was subject to them" (Luke II—51). Christ loved His Mother tenderly while on earth, and loves her now devotedly in Heaven.

The first public miracle performed by Jesus, the first manifestation of His Divine power was in obedience to the wish of His Mother, at the marriage feast of Cana, when He changed the water into wine.

After His cruel, bitter passion, after His trying journey to Mount Calvary, after being nailed to the gibbet of the cross, even in the very throes of death, the loving heart of the Child went out to His Mother, whom he sees sorrowful beneath His Cross, and He prays His beloved Apostle, Saint John, to care for her, and take her as his own mother.

When He had provided for the best, the greatest and dearest of His treasures on earth, His Mother, He is prepared to give up His spirit into the hands of His Heavenly Father for our redemption; bowing, therefore, His head, he spoke the word: "It is consummated," and died.

"What more can I do than give my life for you." These words of Christ are especially ap-

plicable to His Mother Mary, for whilst He died for the redemption of all men, it was through the anticipated merits of His holy passion and death that His Mother, Mary, was conceived immaculate, and thus made worthy of the sublime dignity to which she was called.

The relationship between Christ and Mary, the ever glorious Blessed Virgin, exists now, though both are in the Kingdom of Heaven, as well as it did while they lived on earth.

In the world Christ obeyed and revered her, and this same obedience and reverence He still owes her in Heaven. His filial affection for her never wanes, His respect for her is that of a devoted Son, while His love for her is greater than for all the blessed in Heaven.

With all confidence can we appeal to the Mother of Christ, our life, our sweetness and our hope, that she pray and intercede for us, at the throne of her Divine Son, for Christ will not turn a deaf ear to the supplications of His Mother, the ever spotless Blessed Virgin Mary.

CHAPTER V.

MOTHER OF DIVINE GRACE.

Jesus is the source of every grace that comes to us from the throne of mercy. Through Him all of Heaven's blessings are vouchsafed to us. From His sacred heart flowed His life's blood, as an offering acceptable to His Heavenly Father to placate His just anger and cause Him to throw wide open the gates of divine grace and rain down His choicest favors upon mankind.

Our Redeemer paid a great price for those heavenly favors. He left the bosom of His Father, became man and sojourned among men for three and thirty years. He shared in their labors, participated in their sufferings, and died upon the cross, to merit for them redemption and life everlasting.

All happiness, all graces come to us through Him. But Mary is the Mother of Jesus Christ, right well, therefore, is she called the "Mother of Divine Grace."

What wonder, then, that the Angel should salute her: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee" (Luke I—28). Mary abounds in grace,

she is a veritable ocean of graces. As the waters of all the rivers are swallowed up in those of the sea, so the graces of the Angels, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins and of all the Saints are centered in Mary, "full of grace."

"The Most High sanctified His tabernacle" (Psal. XLV—5). His Mother is that tabernacle. The Word was made flesh in her womb; the body of Jesus Christ was formed out of the substance of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, and this dignity necessarily entitled her to the plenitude of all graces.

"In Him (Christ) dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporally" (Colos. II—9). But Christ took up his abode in Mary, hence the fulness of the divinity was in her, and with it the abundance of grace, so that when she became the Mother of Christ, she became the Mother of of Divine grace.

Mary surpasses the greatness of the world, for He, whom the world cannot contain, was conceived in her; she eclipses the vastness of the Heavens since she gave a home to Him, whom the Heavens are unable to hold. The fountains of grace that embellish the souls of the Saints, making them holy before God, have

their source in Mary. Of her, it is written in the Holy Scriptures: "I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus, and a cypress tree on Mount Sion.

I was exalted like a palm tree in Cades, and as a rose plant in Jericho:

As a fair olive tree in the plains, and as a plane tree by the water in the streets, was I exalted:

I gave a sweet smell like cinnamon, and aromatic balm; I yielded a sweet odour like the best myrrh:

And I perfumed my dwelling as storax and galbanum, and onyx, and aloes, and as the frankincense not cut, and my odour is as the purest balm.

I have stretched out my branches as the turpentine tree, and my branches are of honour and grace.

As the vine, I have brought forth a pleasant odour: and my flowers are the fruit of honour and riches.

I am the mother of fair love, and of fear and of knowledge, and of holy hope.

In me is all grace of the way, and of the truth, in me is all hope of life and of virtue" (Eccles. XXIV—17-25).

All that is here written by the inspired writer and applied to Mary, the Mother of our Lord, portrays in beautiful language her eminent sanctity, exalted virtue, and the fulness of grace that adorns her soul.

Whilst Christ is the way, Mary, mother of divine grace, leads us to it; though He be the truth, she, who is full of wisdom, guides us in the way of truth; albeit, He is full of life, in her is all hope of life and of virtue.

What we are, we are by the grace of God. Of ourselves we can do nothing worthy of life eternal. We are worthy of God's grace through the merits of Christ. But Mary is the Mother of Christ, and as such the Mother of divine grace, for every grace from Heaven comes to us through Jesus Christ, her Divine Son.

CHAPTER VI.

MOTHER MOST PURE.

Mary, though a mother, remained always a virgin, hence always most pure. It was fitting that her purity should be the greatest after that of Jesus, her Divine Son.

So pure is Mary that she became disturbed at the presence even of an angel. When the messenger of God announced to her that she was chosen to become the Mother of God, she hesitated, and would have declined the honor, had it entailed the loss of her virginal purity, which she prized above all honors.

It was becoming her dignity as the Mother of God, that she should shine forth in purity of both body and soul, unequalled by angel or saint. Applying to her the words of the Book of Wisdom, she is called "a vapour of the power of God and a certain pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty God: and therefore no defiled thing cometh into her" (Wisd. VIII—25).

The laws of nature were suspended in her regard. She conceived and gave birth to a son,

the Son of God, still she continued a virgin without spot or stain in her. Because of her great purity, Mary has been likened to the dove, the holy Jerusalem, the sublime throne of God, the ark of sanctification and the house built by Eternal Wisdom.

She is spoken of as the queen filled with delights, resting upon her beloved, and who came from the mouth of the Most High all perfect, all beautiful, all pure in His sight.

For this did God salute her in the words of the Archangel, "Hail, full of grace." The same reason actuated Saint Elizabeth to greet her, "Blessed art thou among women."

She is blessed among women because of her incomparable purity of body and soul, whereby she outranks all the saints and angels.

Saint Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, exhorts the faithful to keep their bodies pure. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good, and the acceptable, and the perfect will of God" (Rom. XII—1-2).

He will have us to offer our bodies to God, and to make them worthy to love and honor Him; to have them a "living sacrifice," that is to keep our body free from all unholy things.

"Know you not," says the same Apostle, "that your members are the temples of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God; and you are not your own. For you are bought with a great price. Glorify and bear God in your body" (1 Cor. VI—19-20).

Mary, of all women, is the only one who so bore God in her body, as to give of her substance to frame for Him a body, that He might become man. Her body was truly sanctified, and profitable unto the Lord, for there was no blemish in it, but it was a veritable vessel of honor, a body all holy, all pure.

"Blessed," said our Lord, "are the clean of heart for they shall see God" (Matt. V—8). They shall see God here by His grace; in Heaven, through the beatific vision, possessing and enjoying eternal glory.

Mary is "full of grace," hence the most pure. Even now she is blessed with the beatific vision and eternal glory, the reward of those who die in the Lord. It is meet and just that she should

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possess God for all eternity because she is His most pure Mother.

As no defilement ever marred the immaculateness of either her body or soul, it is her right and privilege that her body should not turn to dust, but be with her most pure soul in the kingdom of her divine Son.

No wonder, then, that we firmly believe with the Doctors and Fathers of the Church in the assumption of Mary into the kingdom of Heaven.

CHAPTER VII.

MOTHER, MOST CHASTE.

To be chaste is to be angelic. What is there more beautiful, more excellent than chastity which makes man pure?

Chastity represents in the world the glorious state of immortality. It requires no extraneous ornament, being its own most beautiful adornment. It makes us pleasing to God, unites us with Jesus Christ, combats the pernicious tendencies of the flesh, gives peace to the body, and, possessing in its essence unspeakable bliss, it renders all who enjoy it perfectly happy.

It is a shield to our eyes, it dissipates darkness and creates brightness. Chastity crucifies the flesh and elevates it heavenward. It fills the heart with delight and furnishes wings to the soul whereon it may soar to the throne of God.

It gives spiritual joy and overcomes chagrin; it moderates the violence of passion, weakens concupiscence and frees the soul from the agonizing assaults of flesh and blood.

We may apply to this great virtue the words of wisdom: "All gold, in comparison of her, is

as a little sand; and silver in respect to her, shall be counted as clay" (Wisd. VII—9). And again: "Love her above health and beauty, and choose to have her instead of light: for her light cannot be put out" (Wisd. VII—10).

For she is more beautiful than the sun and above all the others of the stars: being compared with the light, she is found before it" (Wisd. VII—29).

Chastity ennobles and glorifies whoever possesses it. Are riches desired here? What is more precious than chastity?

She should be our closest companion in life, having the assurance that through her, we will come into the enjoyment of the greatest wealth. In our cares and sorrows, she will be our sweetest comfort. Through her, we shall win immortality and leave unto those who shall come after us a glorious and abiding memory.

In our home she shall be company to us and her discourse being void of all bitterness, she shall be a source of joy and gladness to us.

Unless God grant us the grace we cannot practice chastity. With humble and loving hearts we should seek it at His merciful hands.

"He that is mighty," may the chaste soul exclaim with Mary, "hath done great things to

me" (Luke I—49). "He hath showed might in His arm" (Luke I—51). The beautiful pen pictures found in the Scriptures concerning Judas Machabees correspond admirably to whomsoever practices the virtue of chastity.

"He put on a breastplate as a giant, and girt his warlike armour about him in battles, and protected the camp with his sword. In his acts he was like a lion, and like a lion's whelp roaring for his prey. And he possessed the wicked and sought them out, and all the workers of iniquity were troubled; and salvation prospered in his hand. And he made Jacob glad with his works, and his memory is blessed forever" (Mach. I-III).

It was by his chastity that the youthful Joseph gave evidence of his great valor. His mantle is seized by the hand of the temptress, but his mind and heart remained free. He relinquishes his garment, but clings to his purity.

The Apostle St. Paul warns us to keep ourselves pure as we are the temple of God. If this can be said of us poor sinners, what can be said of Mary, the Immaculate, who carried God Himself in her chaste womb? "Know you not, that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

We are the temple, not of man, but of God; we are a holy and not a profane temple, a temple wherein God loves to dwell, especially when it is adorned with chastity. "But if any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy, which you are" (1 Cor. III—16-17).

Of all the children of men, Mary is the holiest, the fairest, the purest. There is none of God's creatures, whether in the heavens or on the earth, that approaches her beauty, her loveliness. She is His temple, undefiled, thrice holy; holy by her eminent sanctity and grace with which the Father endowed her; holy by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, Who chose her as His chaste spouse; holy in conceiving in her immaculate womb Jesus Christ, the beloved Son of the Father, and her own Divine Son.

Eternal holiness, infinite chastity, God the all-perfect, chose her as His mother, the mother of Jesus, the infinite source of all grace.

'Twas midst the pure, white lilies of her virginal womb, that He took up His abode among men. She was all fair in His sight, and He rejoiced in the beauty of her chaste body and soul. Full of grace, she was pre-eminently holy and pure, and because of her chastity, He took of

her immaculate flesh and blood, becoming her Son, without the least umbrage to her chastity, for she remains always a virgin, though the Mother Most Chaste of Jesus, the Son of God and the Redeemer of men.

CHAPTER VIII.

MOTHER UNDEFILED.

Man's life is a warfare here below, not merely for a time, but throughout its whole course. Against us are marshaled the powers of darkness, the seductions of a wicked world and the temptations of the flesh. While every man is born with the guilt of sin upon him, his soul is made as white as the purest fleece by the cleansing waters of holy baptism. From a child of wrath he becomes a child of God.

Through the efficacy of the regenerating waters of baptism, we are made pleasing in the sight of God, since there is no longer a stain upon us, hence our Lord said, "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come to me: for the kingdom of Heaven is for such" (Matt. XIX—14).

But how short lived, for the most of men is the holy innocence of their childhood! Are we not told in holy scripture that he that saith he did no wrong hath not the truth in him?

Like the beautiful bright rays of the sun which are obscured by darkness, oftentimes by omi-

nous clouds; or like the snowflakes that mantle the earth with a pure white vesture, which are quickly defiled by coming in contact with earth's corruption; or, again, like the pure sparkling waters, gurgling forth from the bowels of the earth, that are soon mudded in their course, is the life of man on his journey to his final goal.

The luscious fruits of orchard and vineyard, so fair to the eye of the gardner; the fields covered with promising grain crops, that glitter as gold in the sunlight, rejoicing the heart of the husbandman; the verdant valleys and rich green hillsides with herds of cattle browsing upon them, are all, at times, blighted, ruined in the twinkling of an eye, blasting the fond hopes of the tiller of the soil.

All that glitters is not gold, and much, very much, of what there is in the world is like the fruit of the Dead Sea—that is, beautiful to behold, yet crumbles to dust at your touch. So it is with the lives of men. Some, like the fairest flowers, grow up exhaling the sweet fragrance of their virtues, when, in an evil hour, their sworn enemy, the foul spirit of darkness, steals into their hearts and robs them of their beauty. Others, like a gently flowing stream of crystal-like water, move along serenely and gently until

deflected from their natural course and are drawn into a polluted channel through the alluring, though treacherous, promises of a wicked world. While others still, like the giant tree of the forest, or the rosy fruit of the orchard, at whose heart the worm gnaweth until it decays and falls to the ground, are devoured by the worm within them, their own flesh and blood, to whose insidious temptations they fall ready victims.

Is there, then, no one to be found among the children of men whom God made to His own image and likeness, who has not fallen a prey to the wiles of the serpent, to the fascinations of a corrupt world, or to the trials of the flesh?

There is one, and only one, our own sweet, loving, humble Mother Mary, the Mother of our Saviour. Like the sweet, violet crouching beneath the hillside, hiding itself away, yet aromatizing its environments with its delicate perfume, do we find the handmaid of the Lord, hidden, away in a lowly valley, midst the hills of Judea, giving forth the most exquisite aroma of incomparable virtues, the humble Virgin of Nazareth, the Mother of God and our most sweet and loving mother undefiled.

It is of faith that at no time in all the course

of her existence, from the very instant of her immaculate conception to the close of her most pure life, did the slightest defilement tarnish her immaculate soul or most chaste body, to mar their loveliness before Him Who is infinite sanctity, her Creator.

She is all fair, all beautiful, radiant as the morning rising, spotless as the sunbeam, white as the snowflake, without spot or stain, free from the blight that overtook man in the terrestrial paradise.

She is the spotless virgin of virgins, the Mother of Jesus, His Mother Undefined.

CHAPTER IX.

MOTHER UNTOUCHED.

Imagine a cultivator of fruit trees, whose ambition is to possess a beautiful orchard of all kinds of fruit-growing trees, giving his time and attention to the ground to be selected, the trees to be planted therein, the fertilizers to be used, and to all the implements necessary for the work of properly tilling the land.

Having made the choice of a field he considers best suited for his purpose, he begins to put it in condition for the planting of the trees.

He plows and replows the soil, he fertilizes it well, harrows and rolls it and spaces it off. He looks after the work himself and sees that all is well done. He then proceeds to make choice of the fruit trees he desires to plant. He supervises their setting out in keeping with his fixed plan.

After some years of tireless care, cultivating and irrigating the orchard, pruning the trees in due season, he finds that his labors are about to be crowned with an abundant crop of the most delicate and savory fruit.

Day by day he goes into his orchard, examines the trees, the leaves, the maturing fruit and sees that all goes well.

His heart rejoices over the splendid prospect; his eyes feast on the beautiful picture his orchard presents. Soon, very soon, the rosy, the yellow, the pink, the white colored fruits of various kinds will be gathered in and his soul will overflow with gladness.

At last the day is appointed when he, with his employees, will begin to gather the fruit. The night preceeding the day named, a violent wind storm passes over the section of the country wherein his orchard is located, bearing, as on wings, millions on millions of insects that settle upon every tree and fruit in his orchard.

On the morrow, when he and his laborers set about their work, they find every tree injured, every fruit tainted, save one lone tree with its fruit, that he had placed at the base of a high knoll, which sheltered it from the wind.

This was the only tree, and its luscious fruit the only fruit untouched by the pestiferous insects that swarmed upon all the others in the orchard. Though saddened at the blight that had come upon his work, the gardner was not broken in spirit, but from the tree that remained

untouched and had escaped ruin he was able to replant a second orchard, without which his labors would have been entirely fruitless.

May we not liken to this husbandman and his work God and the work of His creation?

He made the heavens and the earth. He beautified the heavens with lights to divide the day and the night, to be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years.

In the firmament He placed a greater luminary to rule the day, and a lesser light and the stars He made to govern the night. They were all intended to dispel darkness and light up the world.

He had the earth to bring forth green herbs, fruit trees, and other trees of every kind. He planted a paradise of pleasure, and in it brought forth all manner of trees fair to behold and their fruit pleasant to eat of.

Seeing that all was done as He willed, He created man, forming him of the slime of the earth, and breathed into his face a living soul. To His own image and likeness did God make man, and placed him in the garden of delights with power to rule over His creation.

"Of every tree of paradise thou shalt eat," saith the Lord God to man, "but of the tree of

knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat. For in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death" (Genesis II—16-17).

But there came a day, a fatal day for man, when the spirit of darkness, the enemy of both God and man, entered the garden of paradise and by cunning speech led man to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, of which he had been forbidden to eat under the penalty of death.

In so doing, man lost his innocence and was forthwith driven from the paradise of pleasure. The earth was cursed in his disobedience, and with labor, and in the sweat of his face man must henceforth eat thereof all the days of his life.

Is Heaven, then, to be forever closed against him? Is the earth to be forever cursed in his work? Is there no one upon whom God can look complacently, no one who has not been touched by the blight caused by Adam's disobedience?

There is one who escaped and whom God finds free from that defilement. The humble Virgin Mary, ever virgin, blessed among women, and who, by a special predilection of God, was protected in her lowliness from the infection that came unto all the children of Adam, was the

only one untouched by the withering wind of disobedience.

The archangel, prostrate before her in her humble Nazareth home, salutes her, "Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee" (Luke I—28). 'Tis our Mother Mary, the fruit of whose chaste womb, Jesus, is to reopen Heaven, bring back blessing to earth and redemption and salvation to man.

Oh, spotless! Oh, ever blessed Virgin Mary! Oh, pure and immaculate Mother of our Redeemer, no stain is upon you. You are all fair in the sight of God. You are our sweet, our loving mother, untouched, even by original sin, from the first moment of your immaculate conception.

CHAPTER X.

MOTHER MOST AMIABLE.

God loves His works and delights in them. His love is commensurate with the perfection of His handiwork, so that the greater beauty He finds in them the more amiable are they in His sight. But God has no work more exalted or perfect in His creation than Mary.

He might make a greater world, a sublimer Heaven, but not a nobler, better mother than His own most amiable Mother, Mary.

Her love for Him, arising from her fulness of grace, surpasses that of all the choirs of angels. Her heart is a very ocean of love. She loved and loves God more than all His other creatures united. In her is all beauty; in her are all virtues, all graces, all perfections that can be found in all the saints combined. She has united them in herself, as the ocean unites in its bosom the waters of all the rivers of the world.

In creating the universe, God but spoke the word; while in creating Mary "He hath showed might in His arm" (Luke I—51). An ardent

love for God consumed her soul. She longed for the redemption of man, for the coming of the Messiah. It was the object of her constant supplication. Her prayer availed and God condescended to tabernacle in her womb and become man to save man.

How lovable, O Lord, is this, Thy tabernacle among men, Mary, Thy most tender mother, by every title that renders Thy creature amiable in Thy sight. Most dear to God the Father, she is no less amiable to her spouse, the Holy Spirit of God.

One of the great advocates and lovers of Mary, Saint Alphonsus Liguori, tells us in his sermon on the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin that the Holy Ghost united Himself to Mary as the fire does to the iron. He inflames her, consumes her, transforms her into His own love, in such a manner that we see in her only the ardent flower of love of the Holy Ghost.

She experiences only the fire of divine love. With reason is she called in Holy Scripture "the mother of fair love" (Ecc. XXIV—24).

If lovable to the Father and the Holy Spirit, how amiable to God the Son Whose mother she is! What son that does not look upon his mother as the most amiable among women! He loves

her tenderly, he sees in her only what is lovable. She is all and all to him, his life, his sweetness, his hope. She is to him the best, the greatest, the most beautiful of women. If such be the feeling of the ordinary son for his mother, what must be the devotion of Jesus for His most pure, amiable mother.

To her alone He owes His being a child of man, hence He loves her wholly without having to share His affection with another. He belongs entirely to Mary. She has for Him an undivided love. Between them there is a perfect mutual love. They are to each other most amiable. Jesus knows and, in a Godlike manner, appreciates the lovable graces that adorn the soul and body of His mother. He is perfect and beautiful because all beauty and perfection are in Him; Mary is all beautiful for nothing defiled is in her.

The integrity of her virginity makes her body lovable; the virtues of humility and chastity render her soul radiant with loveliness. Her body is as pure as the snow, her soul is spotless.

Mary, the Mother of Him Who is dignity itself; beautiful, beside eternal beauty, immaculate in presence of Him Who never knew corruption, great with the Most High, spouse of

the Holy Ghost, is the mother most amiable of Jesus. She conceived Him in her womb, nursed Him in His infancy and cared for Him in childhood and young manhood, accompanied Him in His journeys of kindness, love and charity.

In His sorrows she compassionated with Him, she rejoiced with Him in His joys. She was ever with Him from the manger to the tomb. His Godlike devotion to her points out how amiable His Mother Mary was to Him.

CHAPTER XI.

MOTHER MOST ADMIRABLE.

The heavens and the earth show forth the glory of God. All His works are wonderful. They magnify the name of the Lord. They sing His praises. Yet, Saint Thomas, the illustrious Doctor of the Church, declares that God could create nothing more glorious, nothing greater than the ever Blessed Virgin Mary, His most pure, most chaste, most amiable Mother.

How true this is appears from the reverence and obedience of her Divine Son for her. That a creature should command her Creator, and that the Creator should obey His creature is marvellous. She is so admirable that she possessed in her most chaste womb Him whom the heavens and the earth could not contain.

In her greatness, born of her humility, in her devotion, in her graces, in a word, in the manner that she profited by every gift or favor that she received from God, He has had more honor, more glory than He has from all His other creatures in Heaven and on earth.

The greatness of Mary as far surpasses that of all others of God's creatures as gold outvalues

the basest metals, as Heaven is above the earth, as the light of the sun outshines that of all the other luminaries. Before her greatness all other created greatness fades away as the light of the stars vanishes before the dazzling rays of the sun.

All the renowned women of the Old Testament, Sara, Debbora, Jahel, Susanna, Judith, Esther and others were but figures of Mary.

Of Judith it was said: "She was greatly renowned among all" (Judith VII—8).

In addressing her, Holofernes spoke thus: "Thou shalt be great, and thy name shall be renowned through all the earth" (Judith XI—21). The people of Bethulia cried out to her as she passed: "Thou art the glory of Jerusalem; thou art the joy of Israel; thou art the honor of our people" (Judith XV—10).

These titles are eminently applicable to Mary and are bestowed upon her by the Doctors and Fathers of the Church.

We owe all to God, and in no wise is He indebted to us. It is different with Mary. Though she has received all from Him, He became, so to speak, her debtor when Jesus Christ, His well-beloved Son, received of her His humanity, which is of her flesh and blood.

In His conception and in His birth the God-man became indebted to her even more so than other children to their mother, for from her alone did He take the substance wherewith to frame unto Himself a human body.

Among all the children of men, from creation and until the last of them shall be born into the world, there has not been nor can there be one so admirable as Mary. Seek midst all the blessed spirits who are ministering angels at the throne of God, and not one will be found more wonderful than the Blessed Virgin. Her sanctity, holiness, virtues, graces and perfections of body and soul are so great that she is more illustrious than all the saints and angels and thereby gives more glory and honor to God than all of them.

She is verily the incomparable Virgin Mary, to whom all the saints and angels pay homage.

The Blessed Trinity honors her as the mother most pure, most chaste, most holy, most lovable in the beauty of both body and soul, of the Second Person of the Godhead, Christ Jesus, the Redeemer and Saviour of the world.

CHAPTER XII.

MOTHER OF GOOD COUNSEL.

“He that is mighty hath done great things to me” (Luke I—49). We shall know only in the Kingdom of God the wonderful things He did for the Mother of His Divine Son.

Mary was prominently before the mind of God from all eternity, and in her “He hath showed might in His arm” (Luke I—51). She is the masterpiece of His creation. He endowed her mind, heart and soul with all graces. He hailed her through one of His ministering spirits, “full of grace” (Luke I—29). Is there, then, room for surprise at the many endearing titles by which Holy Mother Church invokes her help in the litany she recites in honor of Mary. All the invocations used in this form of prayer are fitting tributes of respect to her.

In vision she appeared to Saint Dominic and counseled him that in order to overcome the heresy of the Albigenses he should preach the devotion of the rosary, hence we invoke her as Queen of the Holy Rosary.

She appeared to two simple and humble children of the people and gave them as her name,

the one so dear to her and her God, and by which she desired to be known and honored: "I am the Immaculate Conception." Queen conceived without sin, our Queen Immaculate.

Four hundred years and more have come and gone since the day when, midst the chanting of angels and the spontaneous pealing of bells, a picture, venerated under the title of our Blessed Mother of Good Counsel, made its appearance in the place where it is held in great benediction. This miraculous picture, the source of numerous miracles, was first honored in a small sanctuary dedicated to the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin at Scutari in Albania.

Misfortune visited the place, because its people failed to recognize and profit by the many favors Heaven bestowed upon them. Pride and the delirium of pleasure wrecked Albania's reason. It persecuted the children of God, rejected His holy word, and after many unrighteous conflicts, fell from the unity of the faith. Weary of its evil ways, God visited it with a scourge terrible in its consequences. As Atila in his day proved to be the scourge of God, so now the Turks were the means in His Hands to chastise the wayward Albanians. Many of the inhabitants preserved their piety and held steadfastly

to the faith in the midst of a deluge of sin. Some of these resolved to quit a land where they were not free to worship their God as they felt it their duty to do, and seek a place where they would not be molested in their religious obligations.

Of those who had determined to leave Albania, there were two devoted clients of Mary, Mother of Good Counsel, Georgeio and De Sclario. It was the practice of these two devoted servants of the Blessed Virgin to kneel in prayer before the picture of our Lady of Good Counsel to obtain a blessing upon unfortunate Albania and counsel in their undertakings.

It pleased Mary to advise them to seek a home elsewhere, and that she herself in the picture which they revered, would also depart from a land so inimical to her and her Divine Son. Genazzano of Latium, in Italy, was the place chosen by our Lady of Good Counsel where she would be henceforth honored.

It was on the twenty-fifth of April, 1467, that the miraculous picture, from out of a lightsome cloud, rested on an unfinished wall of the Chapel of Saint Biagio.

The multitudes who were gathered there on that day and saw the venerated picture of Our

Lady of Good Counsel settling upon their church, were overcome with awe and admiration. Since then Genazzano has been the mecca of armies of pilgrims from Italy and other countries, who seek temporal and spiritual favors through Mary, the Mother of Good Counsel.

She is the seat of wisdom, which she possessed from the beginning. Through her inspirations we are enabled to turn aside from evil paths, into the only secure way of life. She admonishes us, by both word and example, to seek above all things the Kingdom of Heaven. She is its gate, and to enter it we must heed her wise counsels, and follow her life as closely as it is in our power to do.

Our vocation is to be saints. To reach the goal, Mary, Star of the Sea, will guide us over the troubled waters of life, if we allow the light of her wisdom to enter our souls.

The will of God is our sanctification, which we cannot fail to obtain, if we follow the inspiration of Mary's counsels in humbly accepting the dispensations of His divine providence towards us.

In joy, in sorrow; in poverty, in riches; in happiness, in afflictions; in sickness and in health, let us seek the advice of our sweet loving

Mother of Good Counsel, that we may possess with her the virtue to keep our soul in peace, and to bless the name of God in our greatest distresses.

She will be our life, our sweetness, our hope; and the beneficent influence of her ways of wisdom will prove her to be our Mother of Good Counsel.

CHAPTER XIII.

MOTHER OF OUR CREATOR.

Mysteries surround us, we move, live and have our being, so to speak, in the midst of mysteries. There are marvels in the heavens, on the earth, in the waters, under the waters and in ourselves.

We know but little of the secrets of God. We understand but imperfectly the ways of Divine Providence. We cannot fathom God's infinite wisdom. His designs are inscrutable. We enter not into His counsels.

Our finite mind is powerless to comprehend the works of the Almighty Being.

As the child accepts without questioning the word of his father, so must we, even more so, receive the word of God as our way, our light and our life.

One of the profoundest mysteries we are asked to believe in, is that of the Most Blessed Trinity. One God, yet three Divine Persons. It is a dogma of Catholic faith. It is a teaching of Holy Scripture, a divinely revealed truth.

The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God, nevertheless there is but one God.

The Father is from all eternity, the Son had no beginning and will have no end, the Holy Ghost is the Alpha and Omega of all things. But they are not three eternal, they are but one eternal God, who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

God the Father alone is not the Creator, neither is the Son, nor is the Holy Ghost, but the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the triune God is the Creator of all things.

God the Son, the second person of the Adorable Trinity, became man in assuming human nature unto Himself, still He did not cease to be God, for as God He is eternal, in whom there can be neither change nor alteration. When, therefore, in the fulness of time, according to the designs of the Almighty, the second person of the Godhead was to become man, she who was chosen from all eternity and who was to furnish Him of her substance, when the "Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John I—14), is as much His Mother as any woman is the mother of her son.

But Mary is the woman of God's special predilection, in whose chaste womb the Second Person of the Holy Trinity was to nestle and assume unto Himself of her flesh and blood and become

man. She is, therefore, His Mother, the Mother of the God man who was born of her.

“Behold a virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us” (Matt. I—23). And the Angel said to Mary: “Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High” (Luke I—31, 32). This Emmanuel, this Son of the Most High is none other than the Son of the ever glorious Virgin Mary. Her Son is the Second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity, true God equal to His Father. He is our Creator. But Mary, being His Mother, is the Mother of our Creator.

Exalted dignity, sublime honor, marvel of marvels, that a creature should become the Mother of her Creator. But what a creature she is, who surpasses in dignity, in virtue, in grace all the Angels and Saints of God. Virgin of Virgins, spotless, most pure Mary, chosen from all eternity to be the glorious and immaculate Mother of our Creator.

CHAPTER XIV.

MOTHER OF OUR REDEEMER.

God created man in a state of innocence, and made him to His own image and likeness. He fitted for him a beautiful home, a paradise on earth, where he was to sojourn for a time only, to be thereafter translated into his true home, the celestial paradise.

That man's happiness should continue during his earthly pilgrimage and be his heritage throughout the eternal years in the mansions of Heaven, was consequent on his being faithful to the state of innocence in which he was created. To lose his innocence was to forfeit his happiness both for time and eternity.

In an evil hour man trespassed against the command of his Creator, by eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, of which he was forbidden to eat. Forthwith he was driven out of the garden of Eden, and in his transgression lost also his right to the Kingdom of Heaven. Yet, God did not leave man without hope. Before passing sentence of punishment upon him, he gave him the promise of a Re-

deemer, who would rescue him from the dreadful ruin he had brought upon himself and his posterity.

Man's transgression was infinite in its consequences, as it was an offense against the infinite majesty of an Almighty Being. An infinite reparation was necessary to make atonement for the outrage offered an Almighty God. Who shall be found whose merits will suffice to make this fitting and requisite reparation?

Shall it be a child of Adam? He, too, has sinned in the disobedience of his parent. All men are born in iniquity. May it be one of the bright spirits ministering at the throne of the Creator? But they are created, finite, therefore, in their nature, they are incapable of infinite merit.

God only can accomplish the work of man's redemption, for he alone is infinite. Will He condescend to repair a wrong done against His divine majesty? He will, for His promise was given our first parents that He would send them a Redeemer. He is the God of mercy, of charity, our God, our Father, who loves us, though sinful we may be, with an infinite love.

"By this," declares the Apostle Saint John, "hath the charity of God appeared toward us,

because God hath sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we may live by Him" (John IV—9). "For God so loved the world," says Jesus Christ, "as to give His only begotten Son" (John III—16).

By these words of the Holy Scripture we readily discern the burning love of our Heavenly Father for us. Now, lend your ears to the declaration of love for us by the Son of God in addressing His Father: "Sacrifice and Oblation thou wouldst not; but a body thou hast fitted to me. Holocausts for sin did not please thee." Then saith I: "Behold I come; that I should do Thy will, O God" (Heb. X—5, 7).

Our Divine Lord offered Himself to God for our redemption and He will come and save us. Hence, Saint Paul, writing to Timothy, says: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief" (1 Tim. I—15). And again: "For there is one God, and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus: 'Who gave Himself a redemption for all'" (1 Tim. II—5-6). To Titus the same Apostle avers that, "Christ Jesus gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and might cleanse to Himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good workers" (Titus II—14).

"The blood of Jesus Christ," asserts Saint John, "cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John I—7). "And He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world" (1 John II—2). "For this is good," writes Saint Paul to Timothy, "and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (Tim. II—3-4).

For this reason the same Apostle assures us that, "Christ died for all; that they also who live, may not live to themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again" (II Cor. V—15). In like manner to the Colossians he writes: "And you, when you were dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh: He hath quickened together with Him, forgiving you all offences, blotting out the hand-writing of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross:

And despoiling the principalities and powers, He hath exposed them confidently in open show, triumphing over them in Himself" (Coloss. II—13-15). In this wise did our Lord effect our reconciliation with our God. In the shedding

of His blood is our victory over the devil, the world and the flesh.

"Thou art worthy," sang the angels in a new canticle, "O Lord, to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: because Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God, in Thy blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and hast made us to our God a kingdom and priests, and we shall reign" (Apocal. V—9-10).

But how came our Saviour among us? What means did God choose to send into the world the Redeemer He promised to man in the earthly paradise? It was through the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation. Herein the Son of God became man. Having promised from all eternity to take unto Himself our human nature and become our Redeemer by suffering in the flesh and dieing on the Cross for us, He descended from Heaven, took up His abode in the most pure womb of the humble Virgin of Nazareth, and was born of her.

God, equal to His Father and man, the only Son of the Blessed Virgin Mary, He was able, through His bloody passion and death as man, to raise the merits of His clean oblation to an infinite value by His union with the Godhead, thereby to satisfy the infinite justice of His

Father, and accomplish the redemption of the world.

But Mary, most loving, most pure, Mary immaculate, is the Mother of the Son of God, the second person of the Blessed Trinity, the Redeemer of men.

CHAPTER XV.

VIRGIN MOST PRUDENT.

Saint Thomas teaches that prudence is the eye of the soul, the pilot of all its movements and actions. We should not wonder that the great Apostle warns us of its necessity. "See, therefore, brethren, how you walk circumspectly: not as unwise, but wise: redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, become not unwise, but understanding what is the will of God; and be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Ephes. V—15-18).

"My Son," says the Lord in the Book of Proverbs, "attend to My wisdom and incline thy ear to My prudence. That thou mayest keep thoughts and thy lips may preserve instruction" (Prov. V—1, 2). Following the counsels of prudence, we keep a watch upon our thoughts, that nothing take root in our mind but that which is godly; we have a guard over our words, that our speech be always holy and charitable, and we govern our actions so as to render them pleasing and acceptable in the sight of God.

When our Saviour sent His apostles to teach the maxims of the Gospel to men and nations,

He bade them to be prudent: "Behold, I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore as wise as serpents" (Matt. X—16). They are cautioned that whilst they are commissioned to carry the Evangel to all peoples, they must watch and pray and be prudent not to be deceived by their artful ways. Though in the world they must not be of it.

Prudence urges us to keep the law of God; to meditate upon it; to know the rewards that follow its observance, and the punishments that are meted out to those who transgress it, so that we may walk justly and piously before God. It purifies the soul, regulates the heart, overcomes excesses and gives us knowledge of things human and divine. It brightens our pathway through the world. It steers our fragile bark of life safely and serenely over breakers and hidden shoals.

"If thou shalt incline thy ear to prudence;" says the Book of Proverbs, "If thou shalt seek her as money, and shalt dig for her as for a treasure, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and shalt find the knowledge of God. Because the Lord giveth wisdom, and out of His mouth cometh prudence and knowledge" (Prov. II—3, 6). Prudence teaches and

inclines us to know, to love and to serve God with all our mind, with all our strength, with all our soul. It helps us to shun evil and to do good. It is the knowledge of the Saints.

“David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the Lord was with him” (1 Kings XVIII—10). Among the beautiful parables whereby our Saviour illustrated His teachings, there is one especially on prudence spoken privately to His apostles, that of the ten virgins. They were invited to a marriage feast and set out with their lamps to meet the bridal party. Five of them failed to carry with them any extra supply of oil, in case of an emergency, while the other five had a quantity of it in their vessels, besides what was in their lamps. When they reached the appointed place where they were to meet the bride and groom, a delay was occasioned, as the bridal party had not arrived. While awaiting, the ten virgins slumbered. Towards midnight they were awakened and told to be in readiness for the bridegroom was approaching. Quickly they arise and set about trimming their lamps. Five of them discover that while they slept the oil in their lamps became exhausted. They call upon the other virgins, who had some in their vessels to divide it with them. But these refuse,

lest they, too, might not have sufficient to last them, and advise those who ran short of it to hie themselves to the venders and purchase what they might need.

During their absence the bridegroom came and was met by the five whose lamps were burning, and they proceed to the marriage. When those, who had to seek more oil, returned they found the door shut against them. They pleaded with the bridegroom to allow them to enter, but he answering, said, "I know you not."

The five virgins who brought oil in their vessels are called the five wise or prudent virgins, while the other five are known as the five unwise or foolish virgins.

Mary, the Virgin of Virgins, carried always with her, not only the oil that kept her lamp burning, but also a vessel overflowing with it, with which she might even supply others who would call upon her for it. For she is the Virgin, "full of grace," full of the oil of divine love of divine charity, of heavenly wisdom.

Prudence characterized all her words and works. Prudence was the talisman of her whole life. She loved and cultivated it day by day. She was never found without the oil of sanctity, holiness, immaculateness. Her prudence was a

buckler that shielded her against the loss of her sublime virtues that made her so admirable in the sight of God. Hence, we hail her Virgin of Virgins, the most wise, most prudent Virgin Mary.

CHAPTER XVI.

VIRGIN MOST VENERABLE.

We read in the Book of Wisdom that, “venerable old age is not that of long time, nor counted by the number of years: a spotless life is old age” (Wisd. IV—8, 9).

From the words of Holy Scripture we are given to understand that it is not the locks of hair, whitened by the snows of many winters, that make us venerable, but rather the purity of our life.

We are not to reckon by the number of years one has lived to determine his worth, but how he has lived. Virtue and not our silver-like hair marks our old age. A venerable life is conspicuous for its merits. It is a spotless life; a life that goes on not for a few days or years, but for ages. Its length of days is without end. When our lives are irreproachable, they are venerable, whether they be of short or long duration.

The patriarchs were venerable, not so much for the length of their years as for their just lives. The prophets, apostles, martyrs, virgins, in a word, all the saints attained a venerable

old age, whatever the number of their days, because of their holy lives. They live in the memory of men and will live through the endless ages in eternal glory.

If a spotless life makes venerable, how supremely venerable must be that Virgin of Virgins, Mary, ever Virgin, whose purity of body and soul transcends that of all the saints and angels more than the light of the sun surpasses that of all the stars in the firmament.

How infinitesimally small is the tiny snow flake that falls from the heaven in comparison to the vast gorges of it that fill up the mountain fastnesses! How incomprehensible the difference between the small drop of rain that falls to earth from the clouds and the immense body of water of the ocean! How incalculably insignificant is the grain of sand upon the seashore if you would compare it to the innumerable grains of sand that go to form the strands of the oceans of the world!

More apart than these is the chasm that exists between all the holy virgins of God and the immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ, our Redeemer.

If a spotless life is old age, is venerable, is not Mary the immaculate most venerable? At

her birth the very angels cry out: "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array?" (Cant. VI—9).

She is the daughter of the Father, the spouse of the Holy Ghost, the Virgin Mother of Jesus, and there is not a spot in her.

CHAPTER XVII.

VIRGIN MOST RENOWNED.

In Heaven the virgins are especially privileged and hold a renowned place. "They sing as it were a new canticle before the throne; for they are virgins. These follow the lamb whithersoever he goeth. For they are without spot before the throne of God" (Apoc. XIV—3, 4, 5).

Virgins are more renowned than the angels. For when God promised them the highest place and the greatest name, he manifested His predilection for them over the angels. Virginity in the angels is not by virtue, they are by nature virgins, whereas those who, by choice and heroic virtue, select to live the life of a virgin are more venerable, more exalted before God.

The superiority of Mary's virginity is readily understood, since she of all virgins was chosen by the Creator on account of her supereminent virginity, to be the Mother of the Word made flesh. The plenitude of the divinity dwelt corporally in her. She was found "full of grace," worthy to conceive the Saviour, to bring into the world the life of the world and remaining always a virgin, to be the virgin most renowned.

Of herself she spoke the prophetic words: "All generations shall call me blessed" (Luke I—48). Blessed because of her virginity and divine motherhood. The prophecy has had its fulfillment in all past generations, as it will have in all future generations, and for all eternity.

The churches, chapels, shrines and altars erected in her honor; the praises bestowed upon her, the pilgrimages made to invoke her aid or thank her for favors received, the prayers that are daily offered to her by the faithful everywhere, are so many testimonials in verification of her prophetic words: "All generations shall call me blessed" (Luke I—48).

Not only among the generations of men has our most loving Mother Mary obtained renown, but she is eminent among all the angels in Heaven. She repaired the losses they sustained by the ejection from Heaven of the fallen angels. She changed the gloom and sorrow that rested upon man into hope and cheer; she broke the chains of slavery that manacled woman; she brought joy to those who died in the Lord by ending their captivity.

Her name is invoked by and honored among angels and men. The angels salute her as "full of grace." Men sing her praises because she is

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the Mother of their Saviour, Jesus. All call her blessed, who is Virgin of Virgins and Mother Immaculate. She is the most renowned of all of God's creatures.

CHAPTER XVIII.

VIRGIN MOST POWERFUL.

The ever glorious and blessed Virgin Mary was prefigured in the Old Testament by many great and distinguished women. Among them we find the peerless heroine, Judith, who was especially renowned by the might of her arm.

Her people, the people of Israel, were in imminent danger of falling into the hands of Holofernes, who was subjugating all before him, obliging the conquered to bow down before the king Nebuchodonosor and worship him as their God. In his conquests he nears Bethulia, occupied by the Israelites, and sends his army to besiege the city. Consternation takes hold upon the people. They fear to fall into the hands of Holofernes, which meant that they should either worship the king or be put to a most cruel death. There lived among them a very holy servant of God by name Judith.

Filled with the spirit of God, she addressed the ancients of the people, she encouraged them to pray and to rely on the power of the God of Israel. They ask her to beseech the Lord for them, as she is a holy woman.

Judith took leave of them, retired to pray and to prepare herself for her undertaking. She besought the God of Hosts to grant her constancy in mind and fortitude in her purpose of overthrowing Holofernes. "For," she exclaimed, "this will be a glorious moment for Thy name, when he shall fall by the hand of a woman" (Judith IX—15).

She went forth into the camp of the Assyrians, was apprehended by them and taken to Holofernes. This is what she sought. Having ingratiated herself into the good will of the general, she, under God, accomplished her design, by decapitating him, and straightway returned to her people.

"Praise ye the Lord," she said to them, for "by me, His handmaid, He hath fulfilled His mercy, which He promised to the house of Israel; and He hath killed the enemy of His people by my hand this night. Behold the head of Holofernes, the general of the army of the Assyrians, the Lord our God slew him by the hand of a woman" (Judith XIII—20-26).

The achievement of Judith foreshadowed the power to be displayed in her day by the most powerful of the servants of God, Mary, ever Virgin, in the part taken by her in our Re-

demption. "But the Almighty Lord," said Judith, "hath struck him and hath delivered him into the hands of a woman, and hath slain him" (Judith XVI—7).

The time had come for God to fulfill the promise made to man in the garden of Paradise, to send him a Redeemer who would deliver him from the slavery of the most wicked one. For this he chose His handmaid, the spotless Virgin Mary, and through her He struck the wily serpent, and beneath her heel crushed his head by the fruit of her virginal womb, Jesus.

She, the humble Virgin of Nazareth, by her immaculateness, found favor in the sight of the Almighty God, who looked complacently upon the beauty and humility of His handmaid and gave her power over the enemy of His people, that she might overthrow him and free those in bondage.

Of her is born the Saviour, who put Satan to flight, conquered the powers of darkness, reopened heaven, and where sin abounded grace still more abounds. All was lost, now all is redeemed.

Not only one people is saved, but all men and nations are set free through Jesus, the Son of the Virgin of Virgins, Virgin most pure, most

chaste. She is the Mother of Jesus, the Redeemer of all men, the Saviour of all the angels, the power of God's strong arm.

On earth and in Heaven, by men and by angels, she is hailed as the Virgin most powerful, since all have participated in the beneficent efficacy of the power that He who is almighty gave to her.

CHAPTER XIX.

VIRGIN MOST MERCIFUL.

Out of pure mercy, Jesus, from all eternity, spoke the word to His eternal Father: "Behold, I come." Out of pure mercy, Mary spoke the word to the Almighty: "Behold, the Handmaid of the Lord." By the word of Jesus the Redeemer of men was made possible; in the word of Mary, the way was at hand through which the Saviour could come into the world.

As the Apostle Saint Paul calls God, "the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort" (II Cor. I—3); Mary may well be styled the mother of all mercies and the queen of all comfort. Her feelings of tender love and ineffable tenderness for poor fallen humanity are as wings upon which she comes to the help of those who invoke her aid.

Saint Anselm assures us that salvation at times is more certain through the invocation of Mary most merciful Virgin, than by supplication to Jesus Himself. Jesus, as our judge, must inflict condign punishment, whereas Mary, our sweet, loving Mother, has only a feeling of mercy for us.

Saint Bernard has well said: "Let Him, O Blessed Virgin, deny your mercy who shall have called in vain upon you in the hour of distress! Who, O Blessed Virgin, can sound the width, the heighth and the depth of your mercy!" (Serm. IV. de Assump.).

It was through the compassionate mercy of Mary that Jesus performed His first miracle at the marriage of Cana, when he changed water into wine. Her mercy for us caused her to follow in the footsteps of her Divine Son, as he bore upon his bruised and bleeding shoulders the heavy weight of the cross, laden, as it was, with our sins.

Out of pure mercy for suffering humanity, she stood erect beneath the rood of her Son, Jesus, and made the offering of her heart's blood in that of the sacred heart of Jesus for our redemption. Did not her most loving soul repeat the words of mercy spoken by our Lord upon the Cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do?" (Luke XXIII—34). She knew His innocence; she understood His generous heart; she was well aware that He was giving His life for those who persecuted Him and nailed Him to the Cross. No word of complaint or reproach escaped her lips, but with a

heart full of mercy and a soul full of compassion, she pleaded with an outraged God for mercy upon the heads of an ungrateful people.

When the lifeless body of her Jesus was lowered from the Cross and laid in her arms, she pressed her dead Son to her mother's loving bosom, as she did so often in His life time during His infancy and childhood. Even in that trying moment she prayed that His mercy might go out to all the generations of men and through His infinite love for them, bring them to the throne of mercy, that with her they might bless for all eternity, Him whom they so unmercifully put to death.

While Jesus rose triumphant from the dead and ascended into Heaven to plead there with His Father for mercy for all men, Mary still remained on earth to be among them a merciful suppliant to Heaven for mercy.

With contrite and loving hearts we should constantly have recourse to her now that she is enthroned in glory beside her Divine Son, and say to her: O Mother of Clemency, our life, our sweetness and our hope, turn thine eyes of mercy towards us, and after this, our exile, show unto us the fruit of thy womb, our merciful Redeemer, Jesus.

CHAPTER XX.

VIRGIN MOST FAITHFUL.

“My meat,” said Jesus to His Disciples, “is to do the will of Him who sent me.” (John IV—34). The faithful performance of the mission which he had received from His heavenly Father was the consuming object of the life of our Lord.

While prostrate in the garden of Olives, during the dreadful moment of His bitter agony, when the storm of sorrows that was soon to burst in upon Him, loomed up before Him, He prayed thus to His heavenly Father: “My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt” (Matt. XXVI—39).

“He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross” (Phil. II—8). In the beautiful prayer He has taught us, He tells us to say: “Thy will, O my Father, be done on earth as it is in Heaven” (Matt. VI—10).

He was faithful to His word, given from all eternity, “behold, I come,” when He came down from Heaven, assumed our human nature and

dwelt among us. As a child He was obedient and faithful to His Mother and His Foster-father, Saint Joseph, for "He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them" (Luke II—51). He was faithful in the home of His Mother, in the workshop of Saint Joseph; faithful in the work of His Father among the Jews, faithful to His will before the judge who condemned Him to death, before the uncouth soldiers who struck Him in the face, spat upon Him, scourged Him, crowned Him with thorns, placed the heavy load of the Cross upon Him and nailed Him to it, whereon He hung until He died.

Who among the servants of God, who among the followers of Christ will most closely follow the faithfulness of Jesus to the will of His Father? Shall it be one of the patriarchs or prophets; one of the apostles or martyrs; one of the confessors or saints? Or shall it be one of the ministering angels at the throne of God? The former had but few opportunities under the chastening hand of God, wherein to prove their fidelity to His word; the latter had but one to test theirs.

Is there no one to follow the faithful Jesus from the cradle to the grave? God be praised,

there was one, the Virgin most faithful, His own Virgin Mother Mary. From the first instant of her immaculate conception, she was full of grace; in her childhood she consecrated herself to God, to do His will in all things.

In the midst of great perplexity of mind and soul, she exclaimed: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy word" (Luke I—38). She kept the secret of God in her heart until He Himself chose to reveal it to her chaste spouse, Saint Joseph. "Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary, thy wife, for that which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. I—20).

Through His childhood, youth and young manhood, she continued still faithful to God's design upon the child, and revealed it not till Jesus Himself chose to do so. She was faithful to Him during the last three years of His life, when he went about doing the work of His Father.

What wonder, then, that He should have lauded her rather for her fidelity to God's word than for being His Mother, when He said to the woman who, on one occasion, cried out: "Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the breast that gave Thee suck;" "Yea rather," said

our Lord, "blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it" (Luke XI—28). Mary treasured up every word of His and thought them all over in her heart.

With Christ, her Divine Son, she was faithful to God, even to the tragedy of the Cross, and would have died beneath it for love of Him, only that God sustained her in order that she might be faithful unto the end in her mission among men. Her whole life was one act of entire submission to His holy will.

She had no thought save to please Him; she spoke no word but to magnify His name; she performed no work but a work of mercy. She was faithful to her immaculate conception, to the graces bestowed upon her. She was faithful to the will of the Father, true to the love of her Spouse, the Holy Ghost, and constant in her devotion to her Divine Son.

CHAPTER XXI.

MIRROR OF JUSTICE.

God, who is infinite perfection, is infinite justice. Every conceivable or possible perfection is in Him in an infinite degree so that the union of them all constitute in Him but one infinite perfection, since He is the only infinite Being. There is nothing, nor can there be anything, wanting in Him.

“Glorify the Lord as much as you can, for He will yet far exceed, and His magnificence is wonderful. Blessing the Lord, exalt Him as much as you can, for He is above all praise. When you exalt Him, put forth all your strength, and be not weary: for you can never go far enough.

Who shall see Him and declare Him? And who shall magnify Him as He is from the beginning” (Ecc. XLIII—32-35). The more you study, admire, praise and magnify Him, the more scope you find to study, admire, praise and glorify Him.

In comparison to what He is, all our admiration, all our laudation of Him are less than the grain of sand compared to the universe, less

than the dew drop, compared with the oceans of the world. Infinite in all things, there is nothing that can be added to Him. He gives of His treasures without diminution or change in Him. Whatever of perfection there is in the angels, in men, in all His creatures, it is in Him without limit, infinitely. He is infinitely justice, because He is infinite perfection.

"Infinite wisdom," says the Holy Scripture, "reacheth from end to end mightily and ordereth all things sweetly" (Wis. VIII—1).

In the incarnation, God, according to His infinite justice, brought together two extremes, two things the most widely different from one another, the infinite and finite, the divine and human. All was in disorder, but in becoming man, God reestablished harmony everywhere and in all things.

"Behold," says the Prophet Isaias, "a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel" (Isa. VII—14). Who He is, Saint Paul tells us: "And evidently great is the mystery of godliness, which was manifested in the flesh, was justified in the spirit, appeared unto angels, hath been preached unto the Gentiles, is believed in the world, is taken up in glory" (1 Tim. III—16).

He is the Word made flesh, true God and true man. As God, He is equal in all things to His Father. He possesses infinite justice, which is infinite perfection. The Incarnation is the masterpiece of the Almighty, more stupendous than the creation of the universe. There is an infinitely wider difference between God and man than there is between the world and nothingness. Man, the king of creation, is finite, so that the difference between Him and nothingness is not infinite whilst it is infinite between God and His creature.

But Mary, the ever glorious Virgin Mother of God, is the masterpiece of His creation. She possesses, in a supereminent degree, all graces, all perfections. There is neither spot nor stain in her. Of all creatures, she is the nearest and dearest to God. She is the marvel of creation, the prodigy of the universe.

If the grain of sand, the snowflake, the drop of rain, the insect, not visible to the naked eye, speak to us of God; if the sun in the heavens reflects His brightness, the moon His beauty, the ocean His immensity, the universe His greatness; if all nature mirrors His perfection, how supremely beautiful is He not reflected in the masterpiece of His creation, in His ever glori-

ous and immaculate Mother. In God are all perfections. In Mary are all perfections. In God they are infinite, in Mary, they are necessarily finite.

Since the union of all perfections is justice, God is infinite justice, Mary is but finite justice, yet in a degree eminently above that of all other creatures. She mirrors, therefore, more perfectly God's infinite justice than do all the kingdoms of creation. Truly, then, is she the mirror of justice.

CHAPTER XXII.

SEAT OF WISDOM.

Saint Paul gives us an insight into the wisdom and knowledge of God in his Epistle to the Romans.

“O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor? For of Him, and by Him, and in Him are all things” (Rom. XI—33-36).

It is apparent from the teaching of the great Apostle, that wisdom is of the very essence of God. He is eternal wisdom, and from Him must all wisdom come. “Wisdom is an infinite treasure to men; which they that use, become the friends of God. For in her is the spirit of understanding, holy one, manifold, subtile, eloquent, active, undefiled, sure, sweet, loving that which is good, quick, which nothing hindereth, beneficent, gentle, kind, steadfast, assured, secure, having all power, overseeing all things, and containing spirits, intelligible, pure, subtile.

She is a vapour of the power of God, and a certain pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty God; and, therefore, no defiled thing cometh into her.

“For she is the brightness of eternal light, and the unspotted mirror of God’s majesty, and the image of His goodness. For God loveth none but him that dwelleth with wisdom” (Wisd. VII—14, 22, 28). From this eloquent description of wisdom, wherein we find that God loves only those who dwell with wisdom, we fully understand what the Apostle writes of Jesus Christ, the well beloved Son of Eternal Wisdom. “In whom,” (Christ Jesus) “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colos. II—3).

“But we preached Christ crucified, unto the Jews, indeed, a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness: but unto them that are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. I—2, 3, 24).

The Apostle declares that true wisdom is to know Christ and Him crucified, for the knowledge of Christ and His Cross is wisdom. “Howbeit we speak wisdom among the perfect; yet not the wisdom of the world, neither of the

princes of this world that come to naught; But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, a wisdom which is hidden, which God ordained before the world; which none of the princes of this world know; for if they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. II—6-8).

It is, therefore, wisdom to know Jesus Christ and what He has endured for us. It is to have a knowledge of Christ and of His Cross, of His grace, of the Incarnation, of redemption, salvation and eternal glory. All these heavenly blessings come to us through Jesus who is the wisdom of His Father. True wisdom consists in knowing, loving and serving God above all things; it helps us to follow Jesus and to praise and thank Him with our whole heart and soul.

Mary loves, above all men and angels, God and Jesus best. Rather than place in jeopardy her immaculateness, she would have rejected the honor of becoming His Mother. Only on the assurance of the angel that she would remain a virgin did she give her consent that the Word should be made flesh of her.

God said to Solomon: "Ask what thou wilt that I should have to give to thee." "Give me," answered Solomon, "wisdom and knowledge."

And God said to Solomon: "Because this choice hath pleased thy heart, and thou hast not asked riches, and wealth, and glory, nor the lives of them that hate thee, nor many days of life: but hast asked wisdom and knowledge; wisdom and knowledge are granted to thee" (2 Paralip. I—7, 10, 11).

Solomon received the gift of wisdom that he might serve God wisely and rule justly his people, over whom God had placed him.

Mary is called to govern, not one people, but all men and nations through the blessed fruit of her womb, Jesus, the Redeemer and Saviour of the world. To rule wisely and in entire conformity to the will of her Creator, she supplicates Him that she should remain always a virgin most pure, most chaste. So acceptable was this to God, that He assured her that she should remain immaculate and that a union more intimate still should exist between them, for He would, in the person of His Divine Son, tabernacle in her most chaste womb and be born of her.

Eternal wisdom would take up His abode in her, and our Mother Mary, our sweet loving Mother, would be the throne, the seat of wisdom among men.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CAUSE OF OUR JOY.

Jesus Christ is the real, the infinite source of our joy. Unfortunately for the human race, sin entered into the heart of the first man and drew upon him and his posterity misery and death.

The pleasant relationship between the Creator and His creatures were severed; their close union was broken. God sought man, after his fall, where He was wont to hold colloquy with him, but man fled from the face of his Creator, knowing that he was no longer worthy to appear before Him.

It was a sad lot for man. Was this sorrowful condition to endure always; was no reconciliation to be affected; had peace for all time fled from his soul? No; the merciful Saviour offers to make reparation for the wrong and restore man to the friendship of his Creator. Jesus, our loving Lord, is our joy, for we were in bondage and He freed us.

He loved us even unto death, and that the ignominious death of the Cross.

Our joy is founded on the mercy of God, Who will heed the prayer and accept the sacrifice of His well-beloved Son for us. "Let your soul rejoice in His mercy" (Eccl. LI—37). It rests on our confidence and hope in God. "For my hope is in the Eternal, and joy is come upon me from the Holy One" (Baruch IV—23).

It comes from God's own promise to us. He will send a Saviour who will crush the head of the tempter and restore peace to the heart of man. "I," said the Lord of Hosts, "I Myself will comfort you" (Isaias LI—12). "Then shalt the Virgin rejoice in the dance, the young men and the old men together: and I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them joyful after their sorrow.

And I will fill the soul of the priests with fatness: and my people shall be filled with My good things," saith the Lord (Jer. XXXI—13, 14).

The coming of our Redeemer in our midst, the efficacy of the merits of His passion and death applied to us, give allegress to our souls. In His day the prophet Habacuc exclaimed: "I will rejoice in the Lord: and I will joy in God my Jesus" (Hab. III—18).

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Hundreds of years before the advent of the Redeemer, the prophet announced His name and rejoiced in Him. He foresaw that through Jesus all would be delivered from the slavery of the most wicked one, and that we would be blessed and would rejoice in Him. Happy is the soul that corresponds to the love of Jesus for us. He is our joy, our peace, our life. He is our all.

But who is the woman promised by the Almighty, whose seed should be our Saviour Jesus, the joy of the human race? All generations know her and call her blessed. She is none other than the humble Virgin Mary of Nazareth, the Mother of Jesus. On her answer to the Angel whom God sent to announce to her that she was to become the Mother of His Divine Son, depended the coming of Jesus, who is our joy.

Her consent was awaited by the Most High, and when she spoke her fiat: "Be it done unto me according to Thy word" (Luke I—38), Jesus nestled 'mid the lilies of Mary's virginal womb, took of her substance and was born of her.

"Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee" (Luke I—28). You pleased the Lord our God, who chose you for the Mother of His Son, who is our joy. We hail you, O most sweet

and loving Mother as the cause of her joy, and all generations, throughout the endless ages, shall call you blessed. .

CHAPTER XXIV.

SPIRITUAL VESSEL.

In the Acts of the Apostles we find a narrative of the life and mission of Saint Paul.

Saul of Tarsus, which was his name before he became an apostle, was in his day a violent persecutor of the followers of Christ. While on his way to Damascus, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, Jesus appeared before him, surrounded by light, and chided Saul for persecuting Him. His heart was changed and he asked our Lord what He would have him to do.

Jesus bade him arise and go into the city, where he would learn what would be expected of him. Jesus called His servant Ananias and requested him to seek out Saul of Tarsus, who was in the house of Judas, to restore to him his eyesight, which he had lost, to instruct and to baptize him.

Ananias, who had heard of the persecutions waged by Saul against the Saints of God in Jerusalem, feared to seek him out. But our Lord said to him: "Go thy way, for this man is

to Me a vessel of election, to carry My name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel" (Acts IX—15).

Encouraged by the words of Jesus, Ananias went to the house where Saul was and told him of his mission to him.

Saul received him kindly, listened attentively to his instructions, was baptized, and immediately went forth to preach Christ crucified in the synagogues, declaring Him to be the Son of the living God.

God prepares His servants and adorns them with the needed graces for the work He calls them to do in His name. In a most miraculous manner did He select Saint Paul, making him a vessel of election, "to carry His name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel."

If God condescended to make use of the marvelous to fit unto Him a "vessel of election" in the person of Saint Paul, who was to bear His name to the Gentiles and proclaim that Christ is in very truth the Son of God; what prodigy will He not be pleased to work in order to create a vessel worthy to carry, not merely His name to a people, but to carry Himself to the whole world?

The vessel that is to carry Him must be as

far as possible like unto Him, for none other would be a fitting receptacle for Him. But God is an infinite pure spirit. He is the Alpha and Omega of all things. "I am," He says, "who am." Saint Thomas calls Him a pure act. Saint John says: "God is a spirit, and they that adore Him, must adore Him in spirit and in truth" (John IV—24).

In the secrets of Divine Providence, He resolved to take unto Himself our human nature, and to do so, he fitted a vessel, all spiritual, wherein He might be carried, and would even take of its substance to form for Himself a body and become man. This spiritual vessel, the wonder of God's creation, was Mary, His Mother, whom He created without spot or stain, immaculate, full of grace.

He put forth the might of His arm in creating her, making her all fair in body and soul, for she it was whom, from all eternity, He had chosen to be the Mother most holy, most pure, of Jesus. She is that Spiritual Vessel wherein He, the infinite, pure spirit was carried without prejudice to His infinite perfection.

CHAPTER XXV.

VESSEL OF HONOR.

In Saint Paul's second Epistle to Timothy, he warns him against those who had the temerity to abandon the truth and embrace error. But the Apostle assures his disciple that he is consoled in the fact that God's eternal decree, whereon rests the salvation of His chosen ones, is irrevocable. All the efforts of Satan cannot prevail against it.

"The Lord knoweth who are His, and not one of them shall perish." "Let every one depart from iniquity who nameth the name of the Lord," and he shall be saved. Whence comes it that there are to be found many unworthy members in His Church? The Church is likened to a household, whose inmates differ widely among themselves. "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and earth; and some, indeed, unto honor, but some unto dishonor."

"If any man, therefore, shall cleanse himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and profitable to the Lord, prepared

unto every good work" (2 Tim. III—20-21). Contrariwise, those who follow false teachings, or who surrender themselves to the corruption of their heart are in the house of God like vessels of dishonor, and they shall be instruments of His justice and victims of His wrath. The Apostle declares that the vessel of honor is the one "sanctified and profitable to the Lord, prepared unto every good work."

Sanctification is the first requisite for the vessel destined unto honor. The more sanctified the vessel of honor, the more precious it is. Of all the members of God's household, in a word, of all His creatures, Mary is the nearest and dearest to Him, because she is the most sanctified. The Divine maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is the closest union that can possibly exist between the Creator and one of His creatures. It was made possible by the loveliness and holiness of the vessel, the immaculate Virgin Mary. She obeyed the injunction of Zachary that we serve God, "in holiness and justice all our days" (Luke I—75). She well understood what her Divine Son meant when He said to the woman who exclaimed: "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee;" "Yea, rather,"

said Jesus, "blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it" (Luke XI—28).

Sanctification, in the words of the Apostle, is: "To present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God" (Rom. XII—1). This Mary did all the days of her life. And, while sanctified in body and soul, she was also "profitable to the Lord." To her alone is God, so to speak, indebted, for she gave Him of her own substance wherein to form the body of His eternal Son, Jesus.

He was to be the promised Redeemer, hence he had to become man, and this could be effected only through the most chaste and ever blessed Virgin Mary, the vessel chosen for the greatest honor in the gift of God to man, that of being His Mother. She is, in all truth, the vessel of honor. She was "prepared unto every good work." Her whole life was one continuous act of love towards God and her Divine Son, Jesus. God's will was law with her, and she accomplished perfectly every design that God had on her. He had chosen her from all eternity as that vessel of honor wherein He was pleased to dwell.

She is holy above all the saints and angels; she is profitable to the Lord more than all His

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other creatures; she fulfilled more perfectly than all of them His divine will in her. She is the vessel honored by angels and men, exalted and honored by the Creator Himself.

CHAPTER XXVI.

VESSEL OF SINGULAR DEVOTION.

Saint Thomas teaches that devotion comes from devotedness. They practice devotion who consecrate themselves entirely to the service of God. It embraces the cultivation of all the virtues. In the Book of Proverbs it is said, that wisdom is "more precious than all riches; and all things that are desired are not to be compared with her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand, riches and glory. Her ways are beautiful ways, and all her paths are peaceable. She is a tree of life to them who lay hold on her: and he that shall retain her is blessed" (Prov. III—14-18).

True riches, says Saint Bernard, are not gold and silver, but virtues. The holy man, Job, deprived of all his belongings, seated on a dung-hill, was nevertheless the richest of all his neighbors, because he practiced virtue. "Fear not, my son," said the aged Tobias, "we lead, indeed, a poor life, but we shall have many good things if we fear God, and depart from all sin, and do that which is good" (Tobias IV—23).

Virtue is the image of the beauty that is in God. It makes us like unto Him. He communicates of His beauty to virtue, and shows forth of His splendor in it. This is especially so in the Word made flesh, who is the divine mirror of all virtues, and of Him the psalmist says: "Thou art beautiful above all the sons of men" (Psal. XLIV—3).

Three degrees of virtue are distinguishable. The first is that ordinary virtue, whereby men live conformably to the laws of God. The second is that of those who go farther and seek to become more and more like unto Him. Their virtues are cleansing, that is by practicing prudence, and meditating on holy subjects, they trample under foot all things earthly and direct their efforts towards the gaining of Heaven; in cultivating temperance they overcome the cravings of the body, and by drawing near to God they are not disturbed by the adversities of life. The third degree of virtues is still more elevated. It disengages the soul from every attachment to things earthly, and in purifying it, makes it perfect. It is the virtue peculiar to the saints. For whether still in the flesh or enjoying the beatific vision, they are devoted to whatever tends to the honor and glory of God. They sing

His praises, they magnify His name, their mind, heart and soul are aflame with love and devotion for Him. As star differs from star in brilliancy, so the saints differ from one another in the brightness of their many perfections. The virtues possessed by one are not in the same degree those of another.

But there shines out one among them, who, like the sun in the heavens, surpasses them all in devotion, the peerless Virgin Mary. In her are all virtues, all perfections. From the first moment of her immaculate conception, she was more perfect than all the saints united. She had the faith of the Patriarchs, the inspiration of the Prophets, the zeal of the Apostles, the courage and constancy of the Martyrs, the chastity of the Virgins, the purity of the Angels, and the charity of the Seraphim. "Many daughters have gathered together riches: but thou hast surpassed them all" (Prov. XXXI—29). The heavens are not farther removed from the earth than the perfections of the spotless Virgin Mary are above those of all the angels and of all the saints. What can we say of her devotion to the ever Blessed Trinity?

We are as little able to fathom its depths as we are to understand the marvels of God's crea-

tion. It is a prodigy of God's grace. She, who, from her immaculate conception, was full of grace, was singularly devout, loving God and His house among men. The conspicuousness of her devotion gained for her privileges denied to all other maidens about the temple of Jerusalem. It was for her the transcendent glory of being called to be the Virgin Mother of Jesus, the Saviour of men.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MYSTICAL ROSE.

The prophet Isaias, in speaking of the spiritual kingdom of Christ, says: "There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise out of his root" (Isaias XI—1). "And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him; the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of godliness. And he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord" (Isaias XI—2-3).

In Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is found the verification of those words of the prophet. She is the rod from the root of Jesse, and from it shall bud forth a flower in the person of her Son, Jesus, the promised Redeemer. Hence it was that Saint Elizabeth saluted her upon the occasion of Mary's visit to her: "Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me" (Luke I—42-43).

While Saint Elizabeth learned, by a supernatural light, that Mary was the rod of the root

of Jesse, from which should come the flower, her Divine Son, Jesus; Zachary, her spouse, was also filled with the Holy Spirit and gave forth his prophecy: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel: because He hath visited and wrought the redemption of His people: and hath raised up an horn of salvation to us, in the house of David, His servant" (Luke I—68-69). At the same time, our sweet loving Mother Mary, inspired by the Holy Ghost, who had overshadowed her, gave expression to her intense love of God in that ever memorable canticle, the Magnificat: "My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour. Because He that is mighty hath done great things to me; and holy is His name" (Luke I—46, 47, 49).

Like the rose among the thorns, Mary, the beautiful "rod of the root of Jesse," among the children of men, grew up, increasing in loveliness and fragrance day by day, until, in the words of the psalmist, the "King of Kings greatly desired her beauty." She possessed all the beauty of origin, blood, mind and heart, but, above all, of grace and virtue. Because of her loveliness, God, the Father, chose her for His daughter, God, the Son, for His Mother, and God, the Holy Ghost, for His spouse.

A closer or more intimate union never existed nor could exist, than that between God and Mary, the rose of His Garden, that grew midst the thorns of trials and sorrows, until in His own good time, He transplanted it from the earthly into the eternal garden of paradise.

“The spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of godliness, and the spirit of the fear of the Lord,” that filled her soul, gave her such a profound and pure knowledge of God, which entered her soul by a sublime contemplation, together with an experimental love so intimate that it lost itself in its union with God in such a way, as to be, so to speak, transformed into Him. This union, mystical in its nature, was gained by her through the secret operation of the Holy Ghost, which is known only to God and Mary, ever Virgin.

Her conception of the Divine Person, our redemption through Him, all the events in the lives of Jesus and Mary are mysteries, known but to God and her. To Mary are attributed the words of the Cantic: “I am the flower of the field” (Cant. II—1). She is the fairest of the flowers and she is all beautiful to behold. She is the mystical flower of the root of Jesse,

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than which there is none more lovely among all the flowers of the field. She is the rose which is the most fragrant and beautiful of flowers. Connected with the Godhead by the most sacred and closest of unions, her divine maternity, she is honored by Holy Mother Church under the glorious title of Mystical Rose.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TOWER OF DAVID.

In the Canticle of Canticles we have a recital of the blessed union which exists between Christ and His spouse, the Church.

The great mysteries spoken of in the Canticle have special reference to the more perfect souls and especially to the most privileged of all, the immaculate blessed Virgin Mary. Of her Christ says: "Thy neck is as the tower of David, which is built with bulwarks: a thousand bucklers hang upon it, all the armour of valiant men" (Canticle. IV—4). It is not of the strength of her body, nor of her prowess in deeds of chivalry, nor yet her exploits midst melee of clashing forces that Christ speaks of her as the tower of David, on which hang a thousand bucklers, but rather of her power over the enemies of God, in thwarting their evil designs against souls redeemed by the precious blood of her Divine Son.

It is said of her in Genesis, when God spoke to the serpent: "She shall crush thy head" (Luke III—15). Referring to Mary, the

psalmist exclaims: "Thou hast broken the heads of the dragon: thou hast given him to be meat for the people of the Ethiopians" (Psal. LXX—III—14).

In the Canticle, she is spoken of: "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array" (VI—9).

Commenting upon these words, Saint Bernard remarks, that the enemies whom we see fear less a great army in battle array than the demons dread the name, the patronage or the example of Mary. Whenever they find her frequently invoked they withdraw from their attack, and disappear as the mist before the rising sun.

These words of the Book of Wisdom are applied to Mary: "And being but one, she can do all things: and remaining in herself the same, she reneweth all things, and through nations, conveyeth herself into holy souls, she maketh the friends of God and prophets" (Wis. VII—27).

St. Bernardine, of Sienna, writing on the glories of Mary, says: "All creatures are the servants of Mary, as they are of the Blessed Trinity; for whatever be their rank, whether

spiritual like the angels, or human as man, or the elements, whether elect or reprobate even the demons, all that is subject to God is under the power of the glorious Virgin."

In the book of Judges it is said of Debbora: "The valiant men ceased, and rested in Israel: until Debbora arose, a mother arose in Israel" (Jud. V—7). She is a figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In the world, weakness had taken the place of strength. The valiant woman appears in the person of Mary, and through her the human race recovered its lost strength. The mother most pure of Jesus, arose in Israel and the demons are put to flight, vices are overcome, Heaven, that was shut against man, is reopened, and his hope is revived in the redemption of the world through Jesus, the Son of Mary, Virgin and Mother.

Her power did not cease at her entrance into the kingdom of her Divine Son, but now we may liken her to Bethsabee, the mother of King Solomon: "Then Bethsabee came to King Solomon to speak to him for Adonias: and the king arose to meet her, and sat down upon his throne: and a throne was set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right hand. And the king said to her: "My mother ask: for I must

not turn away thy face" (3 Kings II—19-20). Jesus has prepared a throne at His right hand and placed His Mother upon it, where she reigns with Him, the "valiant woman" spoken of in Holy Scripture, "strong with the strength of the King of Heaven, her Son, Jesus."

Another type of Mary, "Tower of David," a veritable impregnable bulwark, is found in Queen Esther. When King Assuerus saw Queen Esther standing near him, the Scriptures relate that, "she pleased his eyes, and he held out toward her the golden sceptre, which he held in his hand: and she drew near and kissed the top of his sceptre. And the king said to her: What wilt thou Queen Esther? What is thy request? If thou should ask even one half of the kingdom, it shall be given to thee" (Esther V—2-3).

In like manner does God, King of Heaven and earth, deal with Mary, the Queen of Heaven and the Queen of earth. She pleases Him: He divides the scepter of His power with her: He refuses no request of hers. She is the most powerful of all God's creatures. She is our defense with Him, our comfort in affliction, and our bulwark against the attacks of the wicked one. She opens up to us the treasures of divine

clemency, and Jesus, our Redeemer, is pleased to dispense His graces to us through the prayer of His Virgin Mother, Mary.

CHAPTER XXIX.

TOWER OF IVORY.

Our most loving Mother Mary is likened in the Cantic of Canticles to a tower of ivory: "Thy neck is as a tower of ivory" (Cant. VII--4). In the Book of Wisdom, it is well said of her: "For she is a vapour of the power of God, and a certain pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty God, and, therefore, no defiled thing cometh into her. For she is the brightness of eternal light, and the unspotted mirror of God's majesty, and the image of His goodness" (Wis. VII—25-26).

Mary was always a virgin, therefore, always most pure. Destined to be the Mother of God, it was meet and just that she should be, after Jesus Christ, the fairest of God's creatures, whether of angels or men.

So pure, so chaste, so immaculate, is this Virgin of Virgins, that she was disturbed at the coming, even of an angel. The mission of the messenger of God was to announce to her that she was to be His Mother. But so jealous was she of her spotless virginity, that were she

to lose it, even for such an unparalleled dignity, she would have declined the honor.

She is truly that "tower of ivory" spoken of in the Canticle, all white, all stainless, "a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty," into which nothing defiled could enter.

How beautiful are the mountains covered with snows, all white, all pure, that fall from the heavens and clothe them with a vesture as spotless as the foam upon the crest of the ocean's billows! They glisten like diamonds under the brilliant rays of the sun. How beautiful and white the silver-like lining of the clouds as they bank in the western sky, when the great day luminary sinks behind them! But the snows commingling with the darksome elements around them, tarnish or melt away under the intense heat of the sun. The falling shades of night veil in darkness the soft, white coloring of the clouds.

How different with the tower of ivory! It diminishes not in splendor or whiteness under the bright light of the orb of day, but shines forth all the brighter, becoming clearer and whiter as the sun's rays fall on it. The rains do not affect it, the heat does not melt it, and the more the elements seem to spend their furies

upon it, the firmer and blanner it becomes. It is an image of Mary, and right well is she called the "tower of ivory."

Her immaculateness loses nothing of its beauty and purity by its closeness to the rays of the sun of Eternal light, but the nearer it approaches the warmth of Eternal brightness, the more does it glow in all its loveliness. All the powers of darkness have not been able to prevail against her. She has overcome their assaults, broken their sway and remains a tower of ivory, beautiful and fair as the morning rising.

She soars and soars towards the sun of Eternal Justice until she becomes, so to speak, united with it in becoming the Virgin Mother of the second person of the God-head.

Like the "tower of ivory," her immaculateness and strength go hand in hand. The tower of ivory is all white and impregnable. Mary is without spot or stain, immaculate, she is proof against all the powers of darkness, the ways of a wicked world and the temptations of flesh and blood. She withstands them all, she crushes them beneath her heel whilst 'midst their wreck and ruin, she is seated on her throne, "clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (Apoc. XII—1).

CHAPTER XXX.

HOUSE OF GOLD.

Moses having gone up into the mountain, God spoke to him, saying: "Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring just fruits to Me: of every man that offereth of his own accord, you shall take: gold and silver and brass." "And they shall make Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in the midst of them" (Exod. XXV—2-3-8).

The tabernacle that God wished Moses to build, and which he planned for him, was to contain the Testament which He would give Him. It was to be, as it were, the dwelling place of God among His people. From it He would speak to Moses and give him the commands He would have the children of Israel to follow. Of the metals that were to be used in the making of the sanctuary, gold was to be the most conspicuous. He instructed Moses to overlay the tabernacle within and without with the purest gold. In a word, all things ordered for its construction were to be made entirely of gold, or at least they should be overlaid with the purest of it.

This sanctuary was a figure of the one He determined from all eternity, to make for Himself, a living tabernacle wherein He would truly take up His abode and dwell among us. It was to be none other than His pure, chaste and immaculate Virgin Mother Mary.

If the most precious metals were used in the building of the tabernacle, He gave command to His servant, Moses, to make, how supremely fine and valuable will be those He shall select to construct His real living sanctuary among men! But the beauty of His sanctuary is from within. We shall find it in the exalted virtues that adorned the most pure soul of Mary. So great was her loveliness that she was saluted upon the part of God by the Angel: "Hail, full of grace." Because of it, Jesus chose her as His Mother, and the Holy Ghost as His spouse.

God is charity, His Divine Son is the embodiment of charity, and the Holy Ghost is the spirit of charity. How intense must be the virtue of charity in the humble Virgin of Nazareth, who was to shelter Eternal Charity in her!

"If then," writes Saint James, "you fulfill the royal law, according to the Scriptures, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, you do well"

(James II—8). As the heavens envelop the earth, giving it light, warmth, fertility, charity embraces all, does good to all, lifts up, heats, nourishes all. By its sweet and gentle influence, the most obdurate are softened, the most sterile are made fertile. It is the queen of all other virtues, and is the first law of Jesus Christ, the King of Kings. "Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up; is not ambitious, seeketh not her own; is not provoked to anger; thinketh no evil: beareth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things: charity never falleth away" (I Cor. XII—4-5-7-8).

In these praises of charity, the Apostle gives us a true picture of the life of the Blessed Virgin. Out of love for God, she consecrated her being to Him. Out of love for God and charity for her neighbor, she condescends to become the Mother of the Man of sorrows. She watched over Him in the manger; she went with Him into exile; she accompanied Him in His journeyings; she suffered with Him during His bitter passion; she stood by Him in the throes of death, and her own soul a sword did pierce when the heart of that Divine Son was transfixed upon the Cross.

How beautiful is Thy tabernacle, O Lord! How pure, how chaste! How resplendent with virtue! It is overlaid from without and within with the purest gold, that charity, which "beareth all things, endureth all things." That "charity" which "never falleth away."

Mary is the most perfect type of the charity of God. O Mother of divine love, O immaculate Sanctuary of our Redeemer, O living chaste Tabernacle of the Holy Ghost, we hail you as the House of Gold, planned and fashioned by the hand of God for His Sanctuary of Sanctuaries among us. For in you, the "Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

CHAPTER XXXI.

ARK OF THE COVENANT.

Saint John tells us in the Apocalypse that "the temple of God was opened in heaven: and the Ark of His Testament was seen in His temple" (Apoc. XI—19).

The Ark of the Covenant seen in the temple of God in Heaven prefigures the Blessed Virgin Mary. Between her and the Ark of the Covenant, built by Moses, are found the following resemblances.

The Ark of the Covenant was made of an incorruptible wood, while Mary never suffered at any moment of her life the corroding influence of even original sin. The Ark was overlaid within and without with purest of gold, and Mary, in her purity, is of the purest of gold, so immaculate is she that of her it is said: "All the glory of the king's daughter is within" (Psal. XLIV—14). The Ark of the Covenant was covered with a propitiatory; Mary is a propitiatory for all who have recourse to her.

Two cherubims, made of gold, spread their wings over the Covenant, whereas choirs of

angels hovered constantly over Mary. In the Ark were placed the tables of the commandments; in Mary is the law itself in the person of Jesus Christ.

There was in the Ark the rod of Aaron, which had blossomed; Mary conceived in her womb that incomparable flower of the rod of the root of Jesse. We also find in the Ark a portion of the manna that came down from Heaven and served as food for the Israelites in the desert; in Mary was the bread of life that came down from Heaven in the person of Jesus, the Redeemer of the world, who said: "I am the bread of life, this is the bread that came down from Heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead; he that eateth this bread shall live forever" (John VI—35-59).

In the Ark was the table of the law; in the womb of Mary was the heir of the testament. The Ark contained the law, Mary, the Evangel. From the Ark came the voice of God; from Mary came the Word of God. The Ark glistened from within and without with the purest of gold; Mary shone, from within and without, with the brightness of resplendent virginity. They overlay the Ark with gold taken from the

bowels of the earth; God enriches Mary with a gold, all heavenly, chastity and charity.

“When you shall see the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God, rise you up and follow it” (Josue III—3). Behold Mary, the Ark in the temple of God in heaven! Rise you up and follow her, paying her homage, respect and veneration.

“The sea saw” the Ark of the Covenant “and fled: the Jordan was turned back” (Psal. CXIII—3). At the very name of Mary, hell trembles, and the demons take to flight.

Before the Ark the walls of Jericho crumbled: before Mary the chains that bind the sinner fall from his shackled hands.

The Ark insured victory to the Israelites, Mary obtains for us victory over the powers of darkness, and aids us to conquer all our enemies. The Ark of the Covenant was a sign of the presence of God among His people; Mary was the Ark bearing God in her chaste womb, for in her the “Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John I—14).

The Ark was the guarantee of peace to the Israelites; Mary contained the “Prince of Peace.” The Ark was the power of the people of God; Mary was the tabernacle of the “power of God.”

The Ark of the Covenant was the propitiatory of the old law; Mary was that of the new law. The Ark of the Covenant brought the favor of God upon His people and a malediction on His enemies, Mary brought blessings to all the human race, but destruction to all who reject the salvation she offers them through the fruit of her womb, Jesus.

God looked complacently on the Ark, He takes delight in Mary, His most pure, most chaste, Virgin Mother.

CHAPTER XXXII

GATE OF HEAVEN.

In the disobedience of Adam, mankind suffered a most serious loss. Adam, and through him all men and nations, was driven out of the Garden of Eden, whilst the gate of the heavenly paradise was closed against him. Though created for Heaven, he sacrificed his claim to it by transgressing the command of his Creator when he ate of the forbidden fruit. His posterity was condemned to the same punishment, and all the generations of men found the gate to the kingdom of Heaven shut against them.

Ere God expelled man from the garden of paradise, he gave him the promise of a Redeemer who would reinstate him in the rights to his heavenly home, would bring back blessing to earth accursed in his sin, and would reconcile him to his Creator in the shedding of His blood.

The Saviour promised by the Almighty was to be the seed of the woman. God spoke thus to the serpent: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her

seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel" (Gen. III—15).

A woman was to be the mother of the Redeemer. No one could enter into the celestial paradise until the Saviour should come. On conquering sin and death, He would return triumphant into heaven, from whence He descended, in order to reopen it to the children of Adam, who would avail themselves of His proffered redemption by loving and serving God faithfully. But what privileged woman was to be the Mother of Him who would liberate mankind? Since, by sin, Heaven was lost, it can be recovered by perfect innocence only, and an adequate atonement made to the justice of of an outraged God.

Heaven alone can bestow the Saviour, while the earth must open the way, be the gate, so to speak, through which He may come to earth in the fulness of time according to the secret designs of God.

That blessed among women was none other than the Immaculate Mary, the Mother of Jesus. By a special dispensation of Divine Providence she was preserved from the original stain of Adam through the anticipated merits of the passion and death of her Divine Son, the prom-

ised Redeemer. She is verily the gate by which Christ Jesus entered into the world, to do the will of His Father, to whom He had said from all eternity, "behold I come."

Jacob, the son of Isaac, having received his aged father's blessing went into Mesopotamia of Syria. On his way he rested and slumbered. In his sleep he saw a ladder which rested upon the earth, while the top of it reached the heavens. Angels of God came down and returned upon it. And he heard the Lord God of Abraham say to him: "In thee and thy seed all the tribes of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. XXVIII—14). On awakening, Jacob said: "This is no other but the gate of Heaven" (XXVIII—17).

Not in sleep, but while in sublime contemplation of God, did Mary see descending an angel from Heaven, who told her that she was found pleasing to the Lord her God because she was full of grace, and that she was chosen of all women to be the Mother of One through Whom all the peoples of the earth are to be blessed.

Her consent is awaited. She must open the way and allow the Just One to come into the world, for she is "no other than the gate of Heaven." Speak! Oh Mary, speak the word

and let the gate of Heaven stand wide open! She spoke it: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy word," the gate was opened and the Emmanuel came unto us.

Arising from prayer, she hied herself to the home of her cousin, Saint Elizabeth, who greeted her as she entered under her roof: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb," Jesus, "and whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke I—42-43). Then it was that Mary burst forth in that sublime inspired anthem: "My soul doth magnify the Lord," and "all generations shall call me blessed" (Luke I—46, 48). Truly all the generations of men and all the choirs of angels will proclaim her blessed, who is "no other than the gate of Heaven," the Virgin of Virgins, the Mother immaculate of the promised Redeemer.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MORNING STAR.

“A star shall rise out of Jacob” (Numb. XXIV—17). This star of Jacob prefigures the Blessed Virgin Mary. She is born into the world as fair as the moon, as bright as the sun, and is as the morning star that forecasts the rising of the sun of Eternity.

At her birth the angels of God exclaim in beholding her: “Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array?” (Cant. VI—19).

Justly may we say of her what the angels of God announced to the shepherds out in the fields at the birth of the Saviour: “I bring you glad tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people: For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the City of David. Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will” (Luke II—10, 11, 14).

In creating Mary immaculate, Virgin most pure, Virgin most chaste, God had before Him His Divine Son, who was to be born of her.

Her conception and birth foreshadowed the coming of the Saviour. She is the morning star of the day of days when He shall be born who will illumine every man that cometh into the world.

Prior to the advent of the Redeemer, holy souls who were looking for the redemption of Israel sighed and prayed for it, pleading with God to open the Heavens and rain down the just One.

If, at times, a faint glimmer of hope of the long-looked for day appeared on the horizon, with all the powers of their souls they poured forth prayers of thanksgiving. What would have been their transports of joy had they known that in the birth of Mary, they would perhaps live to see the day wherein the Redeemer would be born.

A dark dismal night had cast its gloom over the whole earth, which could be dissipated only by the coming of the Saviour. Mary was the dawn of that day. "The night is passed and the day is at hand" (Rom. XIII—12). Mary gives us hope, for while she is not the day itself, she is the harbinger of it.

We see not yet the promised One, but we do behold the splendor of her who is to be His Virgin Mother. She is as the morning star

that forecasts the coming of the day so earnestly prayed for.

Eve was the first to give way to the tempter and eat of the forbidden fruit, Mary, the new Eve, is the fruit in the order of redemption to foil the serpent's insidiousness and triumph over Him, for she is the immaculate, from whose virginial womb shall come the promised Redeemer who will save His people.

When the Magi came to Jerusalem seeking the new born king of the Jews, they said to the king: "We have seen His star in the East" (Matt. II—2). Though all Jerusalem was unconscious of the wonderful happenings at its very doors, a star in the heavens guided those of the east to the manger where they found the child wrapped in swaddling clothes, and falling upon their knees they adored Him.

Oblivious of the star that was to rise out of Jacob, the world slumbered whilst from out of the heavens came an archangel to announce its appearance and admire it: "Hail, full of grace," spoke the messenger of God to Mary, the humble Virgin of Nazareth, who was heaven's first blessing to earth in the order of redemption. "Hail, full of grace," without stain, all loveable in the sight of her Creator, rising, as the morn-

ing star, of the day, the great day, wherein it would be said, the Saviour is born among us.

Saint Elizabeth proclaimed it, inspired by the Holy Spirit, "whence comes it that the Mother of my God should come to me?" The great and holy man Simeon gave vent to the same joy, when, in the temple, he received the child Jesus into his arms, he said: "Now, thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, because my eyes have seen thy salvation" (Luke II—29-30).

The night had passed and the day was at hand, for the star had risen out of Jacob, the morning star, our sweet, our loving Mother Mary, preceeded the great day, wherein the desired of all nations was to make His appearance in the person of Jesus, the Son of the ever glorious Virgin Mary.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HEALTH OF THE WEAK.

Since the unfortunate downfall of man in transgressing the command of his Creator, innumerable miseries have become his portion in life. He was told that in what day soever he would eat of the forbidden fruit, he should surely die the death.

Led astray by the spirit of evil, who was jealous of man's happiness, he took of the fruit and ate. In that hour he parted, not only with the beauty of his soul, but he also sustained in his body the consequences of sin.

Sickness, disease and countless infirmities became his lot. He has now to battle against these ills to prolong a life that otherwise would have endured forever. To retrieve his loss, man of himself had no hope. God's decree condemning him had gone forth and the "heavens and the earth will pass away," but His word will abide unendingly.

Misery and death will henceforth mark his path through life, for he carried in him the seed of suffering and death, because of his disobedi-

ence. Having lost the vigor of body and soul, he must have a way to recuperate his strength. In the sweat of his face he has to work in order to provide for the necessities of life, and for his soul, he must seek heaven's indulgence by being faithful to God midst the vicissitudes of his earthly sojourn.

He was promised a Redeemer, who would bring back blessing to the earth and God's friendship to his soul. Yet he must die to resurrect in the last day provided he loves and serves his Creator during life. The merits of his suffering Lord will be applied to his soul to restore health and life to it, and in God's own time to his body.

As food sustains the life of the body, grace gives life to the soul. When we become feeble in body, we resort to those helps that will reinvigorate it and bring it back, as far as we can, to its first energy. Every available means is sought in order to recover our lost health. If we hear of any skilled physician who has been successful in the treatment of the ailment we suffer with, we quickly seek him and enlist his services in our behalf.

Man clings to life, parting with it reluctantly. Vast amounts of money are expended by those

who can afford it, to prolong their life, even for a short time. This being true of the life of the body that must, however, on the word of God, return some day to the dust from which it is made, what should be our zeal in regard to the life of the soul that is immortal?

On its healthful condition depends the eternal life of glory promised to those who live in the love of God to the end. "What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul," or "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Our greatest efforts should tend to keep our soul healthy, or if, unfortunately, it has become enfeebled by wrong doing and thereby parted with grace, which is the life of the soul, it behooves us to remedy the evil done by having recourse to those means that can heal and restore it to life. If we knew of anyone who could help us in our infirmities of soul we would be most unwise to say the least, to delay having recourse to that person.

But Mary, "full of grace," is that one. She has practised every virtue in an eminent degree, and as through her the Heavenly Physician of our soul came among us, through her we may find Him in our need.

By her humility and admirable purity she brought Jesus Christ from Heaven to earth, she is the gate of Heaven, and by her words, her example, her encouragement, she points us out the way to him.

Jesus, from the Cross, gave her to us as our mother, so that in our trials, difficulties and weakness we may have recourse to her, the best of mothers, and that we may appeal to her in all our necessities.

Should we attempt a recital of our Mother Mary being the health of the infirm in body there would be no end to it, but what tongue can tell all she has done for the health of those weak souls deprived of the grace of God through their own folly. Having received the plentitude of grace, Mary comes to the aid of the weak, and by its superabundance in her enables them to recover the health of the soul.

Her merits plead constantly for us before the throne of God, and obtain for us all necessary graces for the well-being of our soul. In all our needs we have an inexhaustible source of help in Mary, whose delight is to be the hope of the infirm, the comfort of the distressed, the health of the weak.

CHAPTER XXXV.

REFUGE OF SINNERS.

When sin entered the world, such a blight rested upon it, that God communed no longer with man as He was wont to do.

There was no fit refuge for him. All was darksome. Gloom brooded over the habitation the Creator was accustomed to visit before its defilement. In his transgression man closed his heart against his God, who could find no delight in a place defiled by sin, where He once loved to dwell.

For four thousand years, tears and lamentations marked man's pathway on earth. Deprived of God's presence, all was sorrow, and darkness covered the face of the earth.

From time to time some slight hope entered into the heart of man, when, through the rifts in the clouds that overspread the world, a faint light from Heaven would come to him. At last the day dawned. From His throne, the Almighty beheld a refuge in the person of an humble virgin, where He could find once more an abode among men.

He would descend in the person of His Divine Son into that refuge in which He took delight, become one of us and repair the wrong done by Adam, father of the human race.

No stain of any kind could exist where He chose to find shelter. Whilst He had taken upon Himself the sins of all men, He could not associate with iniquity or seek a refuge where sin was ever known. He is one with His Heavenly Father, who is eternal holiness, to whom the very shadow of sin is repulsive.

In Mary, however, Mary full of grace, Mary most pure, most chaste, Mary immaculate, He found a suitable refuge, where He could enter without umbrage to His infinite majesty and sanctity. Midst the lilies of Mary's virginal womb the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

No sooner was Jesus the Saviour born of Mary, than the angels of God announced the glad tidings to man in the person of the shepherds out in the field tending their flocks, and bade them to go and find their Lord and God in the manger at Bethlehem. "And they came with haste: and they found Mary and Joseph and the Infant lying in the manger.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and

praising God, for all the things they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them" (Luke II—16-20).

Protection and salvation had come to them through Mary, and they rejoiced with exceeding great joy that their Redeemer had found a refuge where He was free from the winds and gales of sin.

The Magi, wise men from the East saw His star in the heavens and journeyed to Jerusalem to find Him, but no trace of Him could be found in that far-famed city. It was only when they reached the stable at Bethlehem that they found Him through Mary. "They found the Child with Mary, His Mother, and falling down they adored Him" (Matt. II—4). The lowly and the great find Jesus through Mary, His only secure refuge.

Man had sinned in Adam, but he sighed for the promised Redeemer who came to him under the shelter of His Virgin Mother Mary. Only those who sought Him through Mary were blessed in finding Him, while all who looked for Him not in that secure refuge were left to their wicked pernicious ways.

All men need Jesus and must seek Him, for all have sinned in their first parents. Those

who have strayed further away from God by sin, require all the more the saving merits of the Redeemer to be cleansed of their iniquities and be restored to His grace and friendship.

The order of things established by Divine Providence has not changed. Hence, to avoid shipwreck on the boisterous sea of life, we must turn toward the star of the sea and direct our frail bark toward that secure refuge, where we will be safe from the billows of sin.

We must turn toward Mary who sheltered Jesus and who is the refuge to which all sinners may look for safety and salvation in Christ Jesus, whom they will find through Mary, the secure refuge of sinners.

God honored her in the beginning, He still honors her. He lavished His graces upon her and she faithfully responded to all of them. All who are sin-burdened and far from their true home, should, like the soldier upon the battlefield, who, wounded and bleeding, thinks of his mother, remember their Mother Mary and seek her aid.

She will be their secure refuge and under her benign protection, they will find their merciful Saviour, who, like the good shepherd, will place

the lost and bruised sheep upon his shoulders and return it to the flock.

The very angels will rejoice because he who was lost has returned, and found through Mary, a safe refuge for all time.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

COMFORTER OF THE AFFLICTED.

“All ye that pass by the way attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow” (Lam. I—12).

The prophet Jeremias here laments the misfortune that came upon his people. Having been among them and experienced the afflictions that befell them, he was able to comfort and console them as none other could have done. The heart that has passed through the fires of tribulation can compassionate and encourage those that are being tried more effectually than one that has but little or no experience worth speaking of in the way of suffering.

Intensely applicable are the words of the prophet to the ever Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of the Man of Sorrows: “All ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow.”

Did not the holy man Simeon address her in these words: “Behold, this Child (Jesus), thy own soul a sword of sorrow shall pierce” (Luke II—35). Great beyond all comprehension was

the anguish inflicted by this sword that pierced the heart of Mary. It was her Son whom she had loved more than herself, who underwent most fearful agonies in all His senses. The same was endured by her through sympathy for her Divine Son, since love is the measure of sorrow. Christ suffered all His life long until He gave up His spirit into the hands of His Father on the Cross. Mary, His Mother suffered with Him. And when the Saviour cried out in agony from the rood on which He was expiring, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me" (Matt. XXVII—46)., the Blessed Virgin, the sorrowful Mother, stood erect beneath the Cross, breathing forth the same prayer.

In the Acts of the Apostles we find that Saint Paul and Saint Barnabas were zealous in "comforting the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith; and that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts XIV—21).

The Apostles consoled those who were in distress, pointing out to them that it was by many tribulations, "they could expect to enter into the Kingdom of God." "For whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth and He scourgeth every one whom He receiveth" (Heb. XII—6). "For

power," He tells us, "is made perfect in infirmity. Gladly, therefore, will I glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may dwell in me. For which cause I please myself in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ. For when I am weak, then am I powerful" (2 Cor. XII—9-10).

His soul goes out to all who are subjected to trials, sufferings or sorrows, pleading with them to bear patiently their hardships as they see Him do, who is called on to endure even more than they.

He consoles them by reminding them of what they may expect: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. VIII—18). "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. IV—18). He encourages them to be patient under present distresses, but to look forward to what they will bring, the joys of eternity.

"The life of man upon earth is a warfare," says the holy man, Job, "and his days are like the days of a hireling" (Job. VII—1).

"Man," he adds, "born of woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries" (Job XIV—1).

"If I lie down to sleep, I shall say, When shall I arise? And again I shall look for the evening and shall be filled with sorrows even till darkness" (Job. VII—4).

In the midst of his greatest afflictions, he sought to comfort those about him and glorify the name of God: "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away: as it hath pleased the Lord so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job. I—2).

The holy man Tobias, in offering comfort to his people, exclaimed: "Thou art great, O Lord for ever, and thy kingdom is unto all ages: For Thou scourgest and Thou savest, Thou leadest down to hell, and bringest up again."

The Lord "hath chastised us for our iniquities: and He will save us for His own mercy" (Tob. XIII—1-2-5).

How beautiful, how consoling, the words of wisdom spoken by the mother of the Machabees, who had witnessed the martyrdom of six of her sons, to her youngest son, who was to suffer death also rather than offend God: "My son, have pity upon me, that bore thee nine months

in my womb, and gave thee suck three years, and nourished thee and brought thee up unto this age.

I beseech thee, my son, look upon Heaven and earth and all that is in them, and consider that God made them out of nothing, and mankind also: So thou shalt not fear this tormentor, but being made a worthy partner with thy brethren, receive death, that in that mercy I may receive thee again with thy brethren" (Macha. VII—27-28-29).

If the holy men and women of God, the Patriarchs, the Prophets, the Saints and Martyrs, tried as gold in the furnace of affliction, were able to comfort and encourage their brethren, what incomparable solace cannot she give to the mournful, who is the Mother of the "Man of Sorrows."

"All ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow." Mary, the most perfect of all God's creatures, is loved by Him more than all others, and yet she is the most bitterly tried of all.

Her soul was pierced with a sword of sorrow from the moment she offered her Divine Son, the infant Jesus, in the temple, to God, until standing beneath the Cross of the Saviour on

Calvary's mountain, she completed her offering in giving him as a living victim to the Eternal Father, as the clean oblation which was to appease the anger of an outraged God, redeem man and reopen Heaven to him. Having drained the cup of sorrows to the last dregs, she is truly the Mother, the Comforter of the afflicted.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

HELP OF CHRISTIANS.

A Christain imitates Jesus Christ, unites himself with Him, lives the life of Christ. A Christain is expected to resemble our Lord; he must be the living image of the Saviour, another Christ.

He seeks to resemble God. Adam was made, as attests the Holy Scripture, to God's image: "Let us make man to our image and likeness: and God created man to His own omage" (Gen. I—26, 27). Christianity tends to restore man to his primitive state, to his first greatness and happiness, to an intimate union with his Creator.

To be a Christian is to be kind to all; to bear patiently with injuries; to help the unfortunate; to compassionate with those in distress; to share in the sorrows of our neighbors as if they were our own; not to close our door upon the poor; to be deprived of all in the eyes of the world, but rich in the sight of God; to serve and love God with all our mind, with all our strength, with all our heart.

He is a Christian, whose soul is meek and just, whose heart rests in God, and who places all his confidence in Jesus Christ. Whosoever tramples under foot the things of earth for the glory of Heaven, despises the world rather than offend God, is a Christian.

As of old, the Israelites were God's chosen people, so today Christians are His chosen people. They were purchased by the precious blood of His Divine Son, Jesus Christ is their King, and Mary, His Mother, is their Queen. Her interest in them knows no bounds, her assistance is never wanting to them in any of their needs. She is a help to them, through her extraordinary example of every virtue. She, "full of grace," is all pleasing in the sight of God and most beloved by her Divine Son. In the midst of the gloom and misery caused by sin, she serves them as the light and the way, to follow in the footsteps of the Saviour, pointing out to them that they must take up their cross and follow Him. She teaches them that to love Him is to love all that is good and holy, that separation from Him is misery and death; that to be with Him is happiness and life.

She helps them by her prayers and intercession before the throne of Jesus. If, while on

earth, at her simple announcement that wine was wanting at the marriage feast of Cana, Jesus was pleased to perform His first public miracle, by changing water into wine, how much more powerful is her prayer now, seated, as she is, on a throne at the right hand of the Saviour in the kingdom of Heaven.

He obeyed her on earth, He will not now, in His heavenly home, turn a deaf ear to her pleading for us. If, by prayer, Queen Esther, in approaching the king, was able to save her people, will not Mary, the Queen of Heaven, in approaching the throne of Jesus and supplicating Him for her people, obtain for them what they humbly ask her to procure from the King of Kings, her most Divine Son.

Mary is the help of Christians, because of her co-operation with the Redeemer in the salvation of the world. She, all beautiful in His sight, refused Him nothing, gave Him of her own substance, cared for Him, suffered with Him, and with Him offered His precious blood to God, as a holocaust to appease His wrath and save all men and nations.

Can He now refuse to listen to her prayer in behalf of those, for whom He died, and who call upon her for assistance? Throughout all the

past ages of Christianity we have signal evidence of her help to Christians, in times of temptation, of distress, of wars, of pestilence, and of all manner of calamities.

She comes to the help of the poor, the afflicted, the sinner and the saint. All experience her powerful influence at the throne of God. As King Pharo sent all who came seeking help in their need to Joseph, so now Jesus graciously grants the help we seek at His hands, through His Mother, Mary, who is also our Mother, and she pleads for us in all our necessities.

She helps us to know Jesus, to serve and to love Him, to live for Him, that we may reign with Him, magnify His holy name and call her "blessed" throughout the eternal years.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

QUEEN OF ANGELS.

In the gospel of Saint Matthew we read that: "If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them should go astray; doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the mountains and go to seek that which is gone astray" (Matt. XVIII—12).

It is generally understood that the ninety-nine sheep left in the mountains are the holy angels, who remained faithful to God in Heaven.

The one sheep that went astray is held to be the human race that sinned in Adam. To redeem man, and bring him back in the way of salvation, Christ left the angels, came down from Heaven, and became man. As such He is their Saviour, though not their Redeemer. He is both Redeemer and Saviour of men.

For the angels He gained grace and glory, election, vocation, all helps, all merit, and increase of grace and beatitude. He is the meritorious cause of all blessings. They had a lively faith in Christ incarnate and were thereby justified. Mary is the Mother of the Saviour of

the angels, and, as Queen of Heaven, she is their queen, as well as ours. "The queen stood on Thy right hand, in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety." "And the king shall greatly desire thy beauty" (Psal. LXIV—10, 12).

The queen spoken of by the Psalmist is Mary. By her divine maternity she became the queen of Heaven and the queen of earth, of angels and of men. All Christians look upon her as their queen, and consider themselves happy to be her subjects.

The dignity of queen is above all other dignities, since it is next to that of the King.

The ever blessed Virgin, being the Queen of Heaven and earth, surpasses in dignity all men and angels. She towers above not only each individual among them in grace, in merit, in greatness, but above all of them united. The doctors of the Church teach us that should we place on one side of the balance, all the graces, merits, dignities and glories of men and angels, and on the other, those of Mary, the balance would show a very great preponderance of weight, in favor of the incomparable Queen of the Angels. She is more pleasing to God, more precious in His sight, and more loved by Him than are all His other creatures. Her divine

maternity claims for her this prerogative. In this capacity she occupies a throne in Heaven beside her Son, Jesus.

A mother is more elevated than all the servants or children in the household. She commands and they obey. The angels ministered to Mary and were subject to her. They were as ministers bearing messages between her and her Creator.

One of them venerated her, and bowing before her, admired her queenly beauty. From that moment until they accompanied her to the throne prepared for her in Heaven, they were subject to her as their queen. "The temple of God was opened in Heaven: and the Ark of His testament was seen in His temple" (Apoc. XI—19). The Ark of the Testament is Mary. "And a great sign appeared in Heaven. A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (Apoc. XII—1).

This woman is the spotless Virgin Mary ascending into Heaven, and taking her place in the eternal mansions of God as the queen of the angels. No wonder that all the choirs of angels bewildered with admiration, gave expression to their ecstasy of wonderment on beholding their

queen: "Who is this, that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array?" (Cant. VI—9). Who was it? None other than the Immaculate Virgin Mother of their Saviour, their queen.

The Father welcomed her and bestowed upon her a power, due to His Mother; the Son hailed her coming and crowned her queen of Heaven; the Holy Ghost received her and showered honors upon her, His most chaste spouse. All the choirs of angels and Saints of God went before her, and acclaimed her their most pure, most amiable, most loving queen.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

QUEEN OF PATRIARCHS.

The Creator, though compelled, because of His infinite holiness and justice, to inflict condign punishment on man, on account of his sin, was nevertheless pleased in keeping with His infinite mercy, to give him the promise of a Redeemer.

Man must go forth from the paradise of pleasure God had fitted out for him, repent of his wrong doing, and do penance. Though burdened with many tribulations, which he brought upon himself and his posterity, he lived with the hope, that one day his deliverer would come, and restore to him the friendship of his Maker. 'Twas God's word to him ere He bade him go out into a world, cursed alike in his sin, and in the sweat of his face gain his livelihood until he should return to the earth, of which he was made. But Adam was not to live until the advent of the promised Redeemer. Thousands of years were to intervene between his day and that wherein the glad tidings of the coming of the Redeemer would be heralded by the angels,

and his star that would appear in the East. The promise given to Adam must come down through his descendants to the generations of men, as they would be born into the world, for it was the only light of Heaven that glimmered for them through the darksome clouds that hovered over them; the only comfort to cheer them on their journey of life; the one hope that held out to them the dawn of brighter days.

The depository of the promise was to be, for generations, in the person of the Patriarchs, whom God had chosen to be the leaders of His people, and to remind them of it. They were good, holy men, who feared God and found favor in His sight. To each in turn was committed the custody of God's assurance to man of a Redeemer.

Now, Jacob, one of the Patriarchs, who had gone into Egypt with his family, whither Joseph, his youngest son, had been taken into bondage, but who, by his virtue had pleased God and became, under the king, ruler over all the land, seeing that his day had come, wherein he was to be gathered to his fathers, assembled his twelve sons around his bedside to tell them the things that should befall them in the last days.

When Juda's turn came, he said: "The sceptre

shall not be taken away from Juda, nor a ruler from his thigh, till He come that is to be sent, and He shall be the expectation of the nations" (Gen. XLIX—16). Referring to these words of the holy Patriarch, Jacob, in his allusion to the Redeemer who was to come from the seed of Juda, St. John says in his Gospel: "Doth not the Scripture say; that Chirst cometh of the seed of David and from Bethlehem, the town where David was" (John VIII—42). Here was David born, and here came into the world, Christ, David's antitype.

The promise given to Adam of a Redeemer in the terrestrial paradise, was now given to Juda by his father, the great Patriarch, Jacob. The Christ, the Son of Mary, of the seed of David, was the promised Saviour. He was the king who should rule over the people of Israel. This would come to pass when the sceptre would be lost to the house of Juda.

Mary, the humble handmaid of the Lord, received from the Angel, the announcement of the fulfillment of that promise, when she was saluted upon the part of God. "Hail, full grace, the Lord is with thee." She is the woman whose seed shall crush the head of the serpent according to the promise made to Adam on the

threshold of a paradise he had lost, and this promise was the only connecting link between it and a paradise to be gained through the seed of the great and glorious Virgin Mary, whose offspring was Jesus, the Redeemer and Saviour of the world.

Mary is queen of the Patriarchs, not only because she became the repository of the promise, but even more because in her it found its fulfillment, as she was from all eternity chosen to be the Virgin Mother of the Redeemer.

CHAPTER XL.

QUEEN OF PROPHETS.

The prophets were men of God, whom He raised up from time to time amongst His people, to keep alive in their breasts the promise of a Redeemer, which He had made to the Patriarchs before them.

The people of Israel were a peculiar, fickle nation. They would serve God for a time; then fall away from Him and stray off into strange, erroneous ways. It was only by the strong arm of God outstretched upon them, by many and diverse calamities that He could recall them from their wanderings, have them to repent, to do penance and be restored to His favor. They often turned from the true God, to the worship of idols. They would complain of the God of Israel and blame Him for the hardships they had to undergo.

No sooner had they been brought back to a sense of duty, than again they would rebel and abandon the service of the only true God, to give themselves over to the worship of false gods. To have them return from their waywardness,

God chose at times to send among them His Prophets, whom He had inspired to speak to them and warn them of the terrible chastisements that must inevitably come upon them, unless they again turned to Him. The prophets reminded the people of God's promise to Adam, to their father, Abraham, and the other Patriarchs, of a Redeemer who would bring blessings again to them. Isaias tells them: "Behold, I will lay a stone in the foundation of sin, a tried stone, a corner stone, founded in the foundation" (Isa. XXVIII—16).

The prophet here makes reference to the promised Messiah, the Christ, who will come and save his people. To this prophecy, Christ referred when He said: "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone, which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner.' By the Lord, this has been done; and it is wonderful in our eyes" (Matt. XXI—42). The chief priests and Pharises knew well of whom our Lord spoke, and would have then laid hands upon Him, but they feared the multitudes who looked on Christ as a prophet. "And thou," says the Prophet Micheas, concerning the birth of Christ in Bethlehem, "Bethlehem Ephrates art a little one among the thousands

of Juda: out of thee shall He come forth unto me, that is to be the ruler in Israel, and His going forth is from the beginning from the days of eternity" (V—2).

The prophet speaks here of Christ as man, who shall rule over Israel; and as God, for His going forth is from the days of eternity. He portrays plainly the promised Redeemer, Jesus Christ, true God and true man. When the wise men came from the East to Jerusalem to find the new born King of the Jews, Herod assembled the chief priests and scribes of the people to know of them something about the Christ. Where was He to be born?

They said to him: "In Bethlehem of Juda, for so it is written by the prophet: 'And thou, Bethlehem, the land of Juda, art not the least of the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come forth the Captain, that shall rule my people Israel'" (Matt. II—5, 6).

The great mission of the prophets was to turn the people of Israel from their ungodly ways, and keep before them the promise of the Messiah, who was to be born from among them. But Mary also prophesied. And in dignity, in rank, in the magnitude of her prophecy, she is the Queen of Prophets.

Inspired by the holy spirit of truth, after she had conceived the Saviour in her womb, she bursts forth in that grand anthem, the Magnificat, wherein she proclaims that "all generations shall call me blessed" (Luke I—48). All peoples and places bear testimony to this prophecy; the churches, chapels, monuments, altars, religious orders and congregations instituted in her honor, confirm it; the prayers, supplications, chants and pilgrimages to her shrines of the faithful throughout the world, to obtain her intercession, proclaim it.

She is more invoked and honored than the angels and saints combined. To her only is given the hyperdulia cult; on the seas, in the valleys, on the mountains, prayers are offered to her. The generations bless her and will magnify her name forever, because of her virginity, her humility, her obedience, her patience, her holiness, her power, her beauty, her mercy, the favors she obtains for her servants, the miracles that are wrought through her intercession, her immaculateness, her divine maternity.

Veneration for her will last, as long as there are men, angels and her Divine Son to pay it to her, as long as God shall be God, throughout all eternity.

172 LIFE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

She was an object of prophecy, and great among the prophets, by reason of her own prophecy. She is the mother of the inspirer of prophets, the Queen of Prophets.

CHAPTER XLI.

QUEEN OF APOSTLES.

The patriarchs slept with their fathers, the prophets passed into the home of their eternity: both in their day and generation fulfilled well the mission given them by the Almighty. They were His special servants among men, preserving and handing down to succeeding generations the comforting promise of a Messiah.

The great day dawned, and the Redeemer was born into the world. The promise was accomplished. The humble Virgin Mary of Nazareth was the chosen one among women, by reason of her immaculateness, to become the Mother of the "Word made flesh." He is the way, the truth and life of the world; its promised Redeemer.

Mary carried Him for nine months in her chaste womb, gave birth to Him, and cared for Him through the years of His infancy, childhood and young manhood. She presented Him to the world as the God-man: the Saviour foretold by patriarch and by prophet. She took Him to the temple, for the rite of circumcision, as required

by law for all male children; she made Him known as God, when, at the marriage feast of Cana, He changed water into wine at her behest. She was the first to declare to men and nations, to Jew and Gentile, that her Son, Jesus, was the Christ, the Son of God, true God and true man.

Thereafter Christ went about doing good everywhere, preaching the glad tidings He had brought down from Heaven and working miracles. To perpetuate Himself among men, to continue His mission among the nations, He commissioned His Apostles to teach all peoples, that He is in very truth the promised Redeemer.

The twelve patriarchs were the fathers of the Jewish nation; the twelve Apostles were the spiritual fathers of the Christian people. It is also held by Saint Thomas that the number of the Apostles corresponded to the twelve stars that formed the crown that rested upon the head of the spouse spoken of in the Apocalypse, that is of Mary.

Christ selected His Apostles from among the poor and illiterate, that it might the better appear from what source they drew their power and knowledge.

“For God,” says Saint Paul, “hath chosen the

foolish things of the world, that He may confound the wise, and the weak things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the strong. And the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible hath God chosen, and things that are not, that He might bring to naught, things that are. That no flesh should glory in His sight" (I Cor. I—27, 28, 29).

The world glories in its wisdom, power and honor, whilst God selects the less wise according to the world, the less powerful, that the world may know that the work done is a divine work.

The Apostles lived scantily; they neither desired nor sought earthly goods; they possessed nothing; they died to all around them to live but for God.

Such was the life of Mary in a sublime degree. She passed her days in comparative seclusion, as poor as the poorest, satisfied with her close union with God in prayer and contemplation. The Apostles lived not for themselves, but they lived and died for Christ, who first gave His life for them. Mary lived for Jesus, and died of pure love for Him. The Apostles lived and died for the good of souls. Mary's

life was one of sacrifice and love for the redemption of men. Isaias, seeing the Apostles through the light of divine revelation, spoke of them in transports of joy: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, and that preacheth peace: of Him that showeth forth good, that preacheth salvation, that saith to Sion, thy God shall reign" (LII—7).

The Apostles were the ministers of Jesus Christ; the defenders of truth; the organs of the Holy Ghost; the messengers of the Word of God. They went everywhere, preaching Christ and Him crucified. Mary was the Virgin Mother of Jesus, the depository of eternal truth, the spouse of the Holy Ghost and the constant companion of the man of sorrows. Of the Apostles the words of Ecclesiasticus may be truly spoken: "These were men of mercy, whose godly deeds have not failed" (Eccl. XLIV—10).

Mary is the Mother of mercy and the dispenser of the graces that flow from the seat of mercy. Her deeds of godliness never abate, they are in our own times the admiration of the people of God. For years after the ascension of Jesus into Heaven, she remained with the Apostles, helping them by her prayers, and

leading them onward to noble deeds by her admirable example. They were bowed in grief, when they laid the body of their queen in the tomb, where it was to remain, however, but a few days. It was soon taken into Heaven to enjoy for all eternity the beatific vision, and to welcome the Apostles at their death, into the kingdom of her Son, their Divine Master.

CHAPTER XLII.

QUEEN OF MARTYRS.

The great Doctor of the Church, Saint Jerome, declares that the shedding of one's blood for Christ and His Church, is not the only martyrdom, but that a perfect submission to the mind and will of God, deserves the same name.

It is not given to all to be called to shed their blood for the faith, but all may merit the title of martyr, who bend the neck beneath the spiritual sword in overcoming the temptations of flesh and blood that arise in them.

To possess riches, yet be detached from all worldly goods as Job and David: to give bountifully of what we have, like Tobias or the widow of the Gospel; to preserve chastity in youth, as Joseph in Egypt, is to be worthy of the name of martyr.

The holy man, Simeon, predicted of Mary that a sword should pierce her heart: "Thy own soul a sword shall pierce" (Luke II—35). As Mary participated in the coming of the Redeemer into the world, freely giving her consent

to become His Mother, so, as willingly did she accept to share in all that God, in His infinite justice, would inflict of sufferings, even death itself, upon her Divine Son, our Saviour, who took upon His own shoulders the iniquities of the world.

Mary loved Jesus with a love that surpassed the love of all angels and men for Him. Her love for Him was that of a mother's heart for her son. She loved Him more than herself, and would rather have suffered and died in His stead than see Him subjected to the ignominies with which His enemies loaded Him.

Christ endured the most fearful agonies in His senses and in His members, in all of which Mary shared through her sympathy for Him. She knew that our Lord was the Son of God, as well as her own Son in the flesh, which knowledge intensified the anguish of her soul.

The bitter sufferings of Christ and of His Mother were not of a moment or of short duration, but they began with His entry into life, and ceased only with His death upon the Cross.

In the words of her Divine Son, as He hung upon the gibbet of the cross, abandoned by all, might sorrowful Mary exclaim as she stood gazing into the face of her dying Son: "My

God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken me?" (Mark XV—34). Had not God, for His own divine purposes, sustained her, she would have given up her soul into His hands, as the words fell from the lips of Jesus: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit" (Luke XXIII—46). As the Saviour, in His death and passion, suffered greater torments than all the martyrs, so did His Mother, because of the depth of her maternal love for Him.

In sorrowful Mary, standing erect beneath the Cross, the martyrs of all times behold their prototype in patience, in suffering, in fortitude, in courage, in virtue, in the love of God, in the sacrifice of their life for Christ's sake. The sufferings of the martyrs, in comparison to hers, are no more than a spring to a great river, or a rivulet to a vast ocean.

The halo of martyrdom that encircles her fair brow, gives luster to the crowns of all other martyrs. She is the first, the fairest, the greatest, the Queen of Martyrs.

CHAPTER XLIII.

QUEEN OF CONFESSORS.

It is an easy matter to follow the leadership of one who is victorious over all his enemies; whose prestige is everywhere hailed with acclamation; who receives homage without stint from his devotees, and who in turn is able to reward them richly for their fealty to him.

On the other hand, it requires courage, virtue, even the strongest attachment and love to champion the leadership of one who is shorn of all worldly pomp and influence; who has neither gold nor silver to offer; who can bestow no honors on those who marshal themselves under his standard. Such a one is Christ Jesus. He holds out to His followers no earthly consideration, only insults, chains, prisons, hunger, thirst and all manner of persecution, with the promise, however of a reward, a crown of glory beyond the grave that no man can take from them.

He offers nothing of this world's goods, nothing of riches, of preferment, of honor, of greatness, but pledges in lieu of the fleeting emoluments of this life, or the stenciled trappings of

the world, that which the "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." (1 Cor. II—9). These are the assets that Christ tenders to those who are not ashamed of Him before man, but confess openly that they are followers of the humble Nazarene.

They are the strength of the church, the foundation stones of the edifice. They are as posts of safety against sin and iniquity, or, like pilots who guide the world in the path of justice and truth. They are the true shepherds of souls who drive the wolves from the flock of which they have care. They are the laborers who are assiduous in ridding the fields of their master of weeds of every kind. They are faithful soldiers of the Crucified, who battled against the enemies of God to save souls from ruin and perdition.

They are noble victors, having triumphed over the devil, the world and the flesh. They are the champions of the Cross which they bear aloft, of which they are not ashamed; of Christ in whom they glory, and of His word which they proclaim fearlessly to all men and nations in the face of dangers, insults, flagellations, im-

prisonments and persecutions. They are the trumpet of the Gospel, the powerful voice of the teachings of Christ, the guides of the people, the upholders of the faith, the depositories of the mysteries of Jesus Christ, the temples of the Holy Ghost.

To the valiant confessors of the faith our Lord said: "You shall be witnesses unto Me, even to the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts. I—8). Carry My name before men and nations without fear. "Blessed are ye when they shall revile and persecute you and speak all that is evil against you, unjustly, for my sake: Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in Heaven" (Matt. V—11-12).

The reward He promises is not of this world, but of that which is to come. They will suffer here, but will rejoice hereafter.

Mary confessed Christ before the world from the moment she gave her consent to become His Mother until standing firm and erect on Calvary's mount beneath His Cross, she confessed before Jew and Gentile in her silent and dignified demeanor that the Crucified was the Son of the Most High and her own Divine Son, true God and true man.

In the face of all the indignities offered to

Him she clung to Him. She followed Him through His bitter passion, she walked with Him to Calvary, she received His limp body into her arms, and pressed tenderly to her Mother's bosom that Son, who so oft in childhood rested upon it.

Every insult flung at Him was aimed at her, every ignominy suffered by Him was shared in by her; every blow that fell upon Him, pained her; the nails that pierced His hands and feet wounded her soul, and when His side was trans-fixed with a lance a sword of sorrow passed through her heart.

Encouraged by Mary's example, the confessors of the faith cease not to proclaim Christ as their God and their Redeemer, notwithstanding the blasphemies and outrages heaped upon them by the persecutors of Christ and of His Church.

Mary stood by the standard of Christ, they following her leadership, cling to it in life and death. And while they confess and do not deny that He who died upon the rood is their God and King, they confess and proclaim that she who stood sorrowful beneath the Cross is His Mother and their Queen.

CHAPTER XLIV.

QUEEN OF VIRGINS.

"The Queen that stood on thy right hand;
after her shall virgins be brought to the king:
her neighbors shall be brought to Thee. They
shall be brought with gladness and rejoicing;

They shall be brought into the kingdom of
the king.

They shall remember thy name throughout all
generations.

Therefore shall people praise thee forever;
yea, forever and ever" (Psal. XLIV—10, 15,
18).

Mary ever Virgin is seated at the right hand
of her Divine Son in His heavenly kingdom.
As Queen of Heaven, she occupies the place
of honor next to the King. This Virgin of Vir-
gins shall lead other virgins to the King, who,
with gladness and rejoicing, shall form His
special court. "They are virgins, these follow
the Lamb whithersoever he goeth" (Apoc. XIV
—4).

To them the Psalmist promises the empire
of the world. They hold the first rank in the

hierarchy of the saints, and because of their voluntary renouncement of all earthly goods and pleasures, which endure not, but pass like vapors before the winds, they are elevated above the other creatures of God. Of Mary, the peerless Virgin, the Virgin Mother, the words of Tobias are spoken: "Thou shalt rejoice in thy children, because they shall all be blessed, and shall be gathered together to the Lord" (Tobias XIII—17).

Especial reference is here made of those who consecrate themselves to God and spend their lives in the sanctification of their souls in holy religion. Saint Jerome explains beautifully the dignity of those children of Mary, the Queen of Virgins, when he says: "Death came through Eve, life by Mary. She formed a new family, one of virgins, in order that her Son, the King, who was worshiped in Heaven by angels, might have also on earth, in virgins, angels, who would pay him homage."

Mary was the first among women to consecrate herself to God voluntarily by the vow of perpetual Virginity. She has drawn millions on millions of other virgins of every rank, age and condition in life to follow her leadership and live the life of angels among men.

They praise and magnify the name of their model and queen, Mary ever Virgin.

They surpass in merit the heavenly spirits, for they are virgins in a corruptible body, which makes their virtue of a heroic mold, and thereby all the more meritorious. They wear a double crown, that of virgin and that of martyr, for the Fathers of the church assure us that the preservation of virginity is a prolonged martyrdom which will receive a like reward with that of blood.

"These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. For they are without spot before the throne of God" (Apoc. XIV—4-5). In following the Lamb, they follow in the suite of Mary, the ever glorious Virgin Mother of the King, and she is ever on His right hand.

How fruitful is Mary's voluntary vow of perpetual chastity in the innumerable children who have chosen her as their Queen! They love her virginity and willingly give up all of life's ephemeral pleasures to merit to follow with her the Lamb throughout the mansions of His heavenly kingdom.

"All the angels and archangels, the thrones and principalities, serve you faithfully, O Mary," exclaims Saint Bonaventure; "All the

powers and virtues obey you; all the dominations wait upon you; all the cherubim and seraphim form your entourage and minister unto you. All the angels cease not to cry out, Holy, holy, holy, is the Mother of God, Mother and Virgin" (Speculi).

How enthusiastically does the army of virgins join their voices in the glad chorus of the angels, praising and magnifying the name of their Queen, Mary undefiled, untouched, immaculate Virgin of Virgins.

CHAPTER XLV.

QUEEN OF ALL SAINTS.

“Be ye therefore, perfect, as also your Heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. V—48).

God Himself, according to the words of the Evangelist, is the great model of sanctity. That we may be saints, He encourages us to imitate him, to follow His Divine Son, Jesus Christ. “Be ye holy, because I, the Lord, your God am holy” (Levit. XIX—2).

Created to the image of God and restored to His friendship through the redemption effected by the Saviour, we should have God constantly before us, and aim to cultivate, as far as is in our power, his holiness.

To be a saint is to live in conformity to the will of God, for His will being one with His divine spirit, is necessarily conformable to the eternal law that governs all things and establishes the measure and rule of all sanctity. In God this conformity is infinite, hence His holiness is infinite.

Sanctity is the love of God and a close union with Him, who Himself is the plenitude of sanctity. In serving God with all the powers

of mind, heart and soul we approach daily closer to Him, and become more like unto Him.

"Be ye, therefore, perfect, as also your Heavenly Father is perfect." From the moment of the Blessed Virgin's creation, she was possessed of greater virtues, of more intense love for God than all the saints and angels. Her holiness as far surpasses their combined sanctity as the waters of the ocean surpass those of a rivulet.

"He that is holy, let him be sanctified still" (Apoc. XXII—11). "For the lawgiver shall give a blessing; they shall go from virtue to virtue, the God of gods shall be seen in Sion" (Psal. LXXXIII—7). Who can, considering these words of the Apocalypse and of the Psalmist, fathom the sanctity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who, in each moment of her long and saintly life, increased in grace and favor before God?

Who, like her, could say with the Apostle: "For me, to live is Christ" (Philip. I—21). "And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. II—20). Because of the loveliness of her soul, Christ did really tabernacle in her, for she is the most holy, the most perfect, the queen of all saints and angels.

Noe, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Josue, all the patriarchs and prophets are venerated; the Apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, holy doctors, all the saints of all times and places are held in benediction.

Of Tobias and his family, the Scripture narrates: "All his kindred and all his generation continued in good life, and in holy conversation, so that they were acceptable both to God and to men, and to all that dwelt in the land" (Tobias XIV—17). But who of all these holy men and women is as acceptable and near to God as Mary? Who among them has uttered a prophecy like unto hers: "All generations shall call me blessed?"

Saint John writes in the Apocalypse: "I saw a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, tribes and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne, and in the sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands: And they cried with a loud voice, saying: 'Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb. Benediction, and glory, and wisdom and thanksgiving, honour and power and strength to our God forever and ever' (Apoc. VII—9, 10, 12).

This acclamation of joy will not stop here.

They will verify the prophecy of their Queen, "all generations shall call me blessed," by singing her praises also and honoring her, the Mother of God, the Mother of their Saviour and Redeemer, through whose merits they now enjoy the blessings of Heaven. They shall bless God because He showed the might of His arm in creating immaculate His Virgin Mother, their Queen.

"Benediction, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, honour, and power, and strength to our God forever and ever," through Jesus Christ our Lord and His holy Mother, the Queen of the Angels and the Queen of Saints.

CHAPTER XLVI.

QUEEN CONCEIVED WITHOUT SIN.

The great and glorious Queen of Angels, of patriarchs, of prophets, of Apostles, of martyrs, of confessors, of virgins, of all saints was by a special predilection of the Creator, conceived without sin, immaculate. The illustrious Pontiff Pope Pius IX. declared this teaching a dogma of the church on the sixth day of December, 1854.

No words could be more appropriate, none more beautiful concerning our most pure, most chaste Mother Mary, our Queen Immaculate, than those of the apostolic letter of our most holy Father, Pope Pius IX. of holy memory, who proclaimed the doctrine of Mary's immaculate conception an article of faith.

From the apostolic brief we learn that God, who is ineffable, whose ways are those of mercy and truth, whose will is omnipotence itself, whose wisdom reaches irresistibly from one eternity to another and disposes of all things kindly, seeing in His prescience from all eternity the lamentable ruin of the entire human race, the consequence of Adam's transgression,

and having in the hidden mystery from the beginning of the ages decreed that, by the sacrament still more mysterious, of the incarnation of the Word, He would accomplish the primitive work of His goodness, in order that man urged to wrong doing by the perfidy of the evil spirit, should not perish, contrary to the design of His mercy, and that which should come upon the first Adam was put aside in the second by a blessing greater than that misfortune, chose and prepared from the beginning and before the ages, a mother for His only Son, that taking from her His flesh and blood, He should be born in the blessed fulness of time; and He loved her among all creatures with such a love, that He placed in her alone, by a sovereign predilection, all His complaisances.

Elevating her incomparably above all the angels and saints, He favored her with the abundance of celestial gifts, taken from the divine treasury, in such a marvelous manner, that always and entirely free from all stain of sin, all beautiful and all perfect, she possessed the plenitude of innocence and of the greatest sanctity that can be conceived outside of God, and in such a way that no other, save God, can comprehend it.

And, indeed, it was in every way proper that she should always shine forth with the splendors of sanctity, the most perfect, and that entirely exempt from the taint even of original sin, she would obtain the most complete victory over the ancient serpent, that Mother, so venerable, to whom God the Father was pleased to give His only begotten Son, conceived in her heart, equal to Him, and whom He loves as Himself, and to give Him in such a way that He is naturally one and the same common Son of God the Father, and the Virgin; she whom the Son Himself chose to be substantially His Mother, she, of whom the Holy Ghost wished that, by His operation, He should be conceived and born, out of whom He Himself proceeds.

This unique and glorious triumph of the Virgin, her most excellent innocence, her purity, her sanctity, her integrity possessed free from all stain of sin, her ineffable riches, of all the heavenly graces, of all the virtues, of all the privileges, her greatness, the Fathers of the Church have recognized the image of them in the Ark of Noe, which, after being made by God's command, escaped entirely from the general deluge of the whole world: again, in the ladder of Jacob "that reached from earth to

Heaven, on the rungs of which the angels of God ascended and descended, while God Himself rested on the summit of it;" by which, her untarnished innocence, and her sanctity, free from any spot, were admirably prefigured.

To describe all that has been said, or, so to say, all those divine gifts and the original integrity of the Virgin, of whom was born Jesus, the Fathers, using the words of the prophets, have likened the venerable Virgin herself to the pure dove, the holy Jerusalem, the sublime throne of God, the ark of sanctification, and the house that eternal wisdom built for Himself; to the queen, who, filled with delights and resting upon her beloved, came forth from the mouth of the Most High, all perfect, all beautiful, all lovable in the sight of God.

And revolving in their heart and mind that the Blessed Virgin Mary was in the name and by the command of God, called "full of grace" by the Angel Gabriel, when he announced to her her incomparable dignity of the Mother of God; the Fathers and ecclesiastical writers have taught that, by the singular and solemn salvation, of which there is no other instance, it is declared that the Mother of God is the seat of all graces, that she is adorned with all

the gifts of the Holy Ghost; still more, that she is as the infinite treasure and unsoundable depths of these gifts; in such manner that she was at no time tainted with the malediction, and that participating, in union with her Son, in the eternal benediction, she merited to hear from the lips of Elizabeth, inspired of the Holy Ghost: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb."

It is also their belief, no less clearly expressed and unanimous, that the glorious Virgin, in whom He that is all powerful hath done great things, shone with such brilliancy in all the heavenly gifts, of the plentitude of grace, and of such innocence, that she was as an ineffable miracle of God, or rather the accumulation of all miracles, in a word, worthy to be the Mother of God: and approaching God as closely as it is possible for a created being to do, and more than all created beings, she is raised to such greatness that the praises of men and angels cannot do justice to her.

In order to bring out more clearly that state of innocence and justice, in which the Mother of God was created, they have often not only compared her to Eve, virgin, innocent and pure, before she fell into the snares of the astute

serpent, but more still they place her above Eve, finding a thousand admirable means to express this superiority.

Eve, indeed, in following the suggestion of the serpent, lost her original innocence and became his slave; but the blessed Virgin, increasing constantly her original gifts, far from ever giving ear to the serpent, overcame entirely, by the divine virtue which she had received, his strength and his power.

Let all, therefore, with even more ardor and piety continue to honor, invoke and beseech the ever blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, conceived without original sin, and let all have recourse with entire confidence to that sweet Mother of grace and of mercy in all their dangers, their sorrows, their necessities and their fears.

There is nothing to dread; there is no reason to lose hope when we walk under the care, auspices, patronage and protection of her who, having for us the heart of a mother, and taking upon herself the affair of our salvation, is solicitous for all men and nations.

Made by our Lord Queen of Heaven and earth, exalted above all the choirs of angels and all the orders of saints, seated at the right hand

of her only Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; what she wishes she obtains; she cannot ask in vain.

CHAPTER XLVII.

QUEEN OF THE MOST HOLY ROSARY.

Our holy mother, the Church, never ceases to look after the good and welfare of all her children. At the sight of any danger she goes to their aid and with the tender heart of a loving mother, offers them her counsel and assistance. The power of God is with her, the counsel, wisdom, understanding and fortitude of the Holy Spirit dwell in her, and the promise of her Divine Founder, Jesus Christ, that He would be with her all days to the consummation of the world, is wonderfully verified.

The teachings and practices of the Church meet the needs of all men and times. She offers to incredulous scoffers of holy religion the devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; those who deny original sin, she confronts with the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary: upon those who seek but gain and are given to a voluptuous life, she presses the life of the poor, simple and indefatigable Saint Joseph, the chaste spouse of the ever glorious and Blessed Mother of the

Saviour. To all she holds up Mary as their help, their support, their secure refuge, rich in every virtue, and blessed with the plentitude of the graces of Heaven.

Many, very many, devotions have Mary for their object. There is one among them that seems to embrace all other acts of piety in her honor, that of the devotion of the Holy Rosary. It was in France, in the province of Languedoc, that it originated in the beginning of the thirteenth century. At this time, great havoc was being wrought in the Church by the revival of an ancient heresy, that of the Albigenses.

Both Church and state united their forces against the common foe, but to no purpose. It was reserved in the plan of Divine Providence, for a holy, zealous religious, a true man of God, Saint Dominic, to suppress the disorders, and obtain a signal victory over heresy and irreligion.

He had labored strenuously to bring back to God, those deluded souls, yet little headway was made. He fortified himself in season and out of season by prayer. One day while the Saint was in fervent recollection, tears dimming his eyes, pleading with God to show mercy to the enemies of Christ and His Church, Mary,

upon the part of God, disclosed to him the means whereby he would triumph over those poor wandering souls and obtain victory for the Church.

"Know," said the Blessed Virgin to him, "Oh, my son, that the means which the Adorable Trinity employs for the salvation of this world is in the Angelic Salutation, which is the foundation of the New Testament. If, then, you wish to overcome hardened hearts, preach my rosary."

Without delay, Saint Dominic obeyed the heavenly vision, and, with the rosary as his only weapon, he set out to win to God souls dear to Him and to Mary. This vision of the Blessed Virgin to Saint Dominic was not her first, nor has it been her last to favored souls. Often she has been, so to say, God's angel bearing glad tidings to men of good will.

The happy results of the preaching of the rosary were marvelous, for history places the number of those misguided souls who returned to the service of holy religion, at above one hundred thousand families. A glorious victory for Mary and her rosary.

This, however, was but an earnest of what in after years the rosary was to win of victories

for Christ and His Church in every land and clime. Today, every devout child of holy mother Church clings to His rosary as to His very life, knowing that this devotion is the power that will enable him to overcome the devil, the world and the flesh. Rather than part with his rosary he would sacrifice his life, for losing his life in such a cause would be to gain it for all eternity.

It is a devotion pleasing to God and to His most admirable Mother Mary. The "Our Father" was taught us by our Lord Himself, while the "Hail Mary" comes direct from God through the Angel Gabriel, Saint Elizabeth and the Church inspired by the Holy Ghost.

The rosary contains fifteen decades of "Hail Marys," with one "Our Father," before each decade. It is a brief yet beautiful history of Jesus and Mary, from the moment the angel saluted her, "hail full of grace," until she was crowned by the hand of her Divine Son as the Queen of Heaven and the Queen of earth.

The rosary is divided into three parts, each containing five decades, and known as the chaplet which signifies a wreath of natural flowers worn on the head as an especial mark of distinction.

Rosary derives its name from Mary's rose garden, or from rose, simply, the queen of flowers, while the "Hail Mary" is called the "queen of prayers."

In telling the rosary we weave the "queen of prayers" into a beautiful crown of Mary's roses, which we place upon her fair, queenly brow and salute her Queen of the Most Holy Rosary.

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